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ME, MY MOTHER AND DANCE: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY



ME, MY MOTHER AND DANCE

An Autoethnography about Muslim Pakistani Women, their relationship to dance
and its implications for Dance Movement Therapy

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Master in Dance Movement Therapy

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the author's personal journey with dance in relation to her orthodox Muslim mother's ideals. The author's Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) practice work placement gave her the opportunity to work with women of South Asia and some Muslim Pakistani women. She thus was able to put into practice and investigate the learning of DMT practices with this group. The concept of the Wounded Healer has been investigated as an attempt to understand how much the personal story can influence, help or hinder a DM therapist when working with culturally similar clients. Through the use of autoethnographic methodology the religious, spiritual, linguistic aspects of Muslim migrant women, the processes of integration into a new country and, the desire or lack of desire to integrate, have been reflected on from the author's mother's perspective. The recounting of the DM therapists own story through autoethnography serves as a personal healing for the therapist in order to become more aware of the processes from the sessions. This story could also promote more understanding of women in similar situations as the Muslim women migrants and open a discussion for culturally specific targeting of this population in therapy in general and DMT in particular.

Key words: Pakistani women, Muslim migrants, Autoethnography, Dance Movement Therapy, Wounded Healer

Resumen

Esta tesis investiga el viaje personal de la autora con la danza en relación con los ideales de su madre musulmana ortodoxa. La práctica de la terapia del movimiento de danza (DMT) de la autora le dio la oportunidad de trabajar con mujeres del sur de Asia y algunas mujeres musulmanas pakistaníes. Por lo tanto, pudo poner en práctica e investigar el aprendizaje de las prácticas de DMT con este grupo. El concepto de *The Wounded Healer – El Curandero Herido* se ha investigado como un intento de comprender en qué medida la historia personal puede influir, ayudar u obstaculizar a un terapeuta de DMT cuando se trabaja con clientes culturalmente similares. A través del uso de la metodología autoetnográfica, los aspectos religiosos, espirituales y lingüísticos de las mujeres musulmanas migrantes, los procesos de integración en un nuevo país y el deseo o la falta de deseo de integración se han reflejado desde la perspectiva de la madre de la autora. El recuento de la propia historia de los terapeutas de DM a través de la autoetnografía sirve como una curación personal para que el terapeuta pueda tomar conciencia de los procesos de las sesiones. Esta historia también podría promover una mayor comprensión de las mujeres en situaciones similares a las de las mujeres musulmanas migrantes y abrir una discusión para la orientación cultural específica de esta población en terapia en general y DMT en particular.

Palabras clave: Mujeres paquistaníes, Migrantes musulmanes, Autoetnografía, Danza Movimiento Terapia, Wounded Healer – Curandero Herido

For my mother, the strongest woman I have known and for my youngest sister Reila who has become the family's next strong matriarch.

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Contents

Abstract.....	2
Resumen.....	3
Acknowledgements	4
1 Introduction.....	7
1.1 Background	7
1.2 Motivation.....	8
1.3 Problem Statement.....	10
1.4 Theory Statement.....	11
1.5 Research Aims	12
1.6 Overview of Chapters	13
2 Review of Literature and Personal Knowledge.....	
Introduction.....	15
2.1 Islam in General	19
2.1.1 Islam in Pakistan	20
2.1.2 Post-Partition: In my mother's time.....	21
2.1.3 Islamisation	24
2.1.4 Islam and Dance in Pakistan	26
2.2 Women migrants from Pakistan – general overview.....	28
2.2.1 Education	30
2.2.2 Expectations.....	30
2.2.3 Loneliness	31
2.2.4 Depression.....	34
2.3 Mental health stigma in the Muslim Community	36
2.4 Integration	40
2.5 Possibilities of Therapy.....	41
2.6 Cross cultural therapy	42
2.7 Dance.....	43
2.8 Dance Movement Therapy	46
2.9 DMT with Women from Pakistan	47
Conclusion	49
3 Methodology	50
3.1 The Setting.....	52
3.2 Autoethnography as a research method	52

3.3 Concept of the Wounded Healer	54
3.4 In the DMT Sessions	56
3.5 Research.....	57
3.5.1 Primary Research.....	57
3.5.2 Secondary research	57
3.5.3 Third phase.....	58
3.6 Ethics.....	58
4 Findings.....	60
Introduction.....	60
4.1 Situating myself in the autoethnography.....	63
4.2 The DMT Sessions.....	64
4.3 DMT and Mental Health	71
5 Conclusion	74
Limitations of the study.....	77
References	79
Annex 1 – My Stories.....	79
Annex 2 – Espai Zarina 2017 Practise Diary.....	7999

Me, My Mother and Dance: An autoethnography about Muslim Pakistani women, their relationship to dance and its implications for DMT

1 Introduction

AnyBODY can and should Dance... It's good for the BODY and the Spirit
Isadora Duncan

1.1 Background

I am a Pakistani origin Muslim woman born in Manchester, United Kingdom. My parents migrated to England during the 1960s. By virtue of birth in a foreign land, I have had a foot in each of my two cultures since birth. Having a strict, religious mother means that I am close enough to my Pakistani, Muslim heritage to have lived in this culture from the inside, whilst being able to question and critique it as if an outsider due to being born and educated in a second culture.

During my studies of DMT, many times, I asked myself these questions: How would you have a DMT intervention with Muslim women if they have been brought up to think that dancing is sin? How would you get someone similar to my mother to even participate in a DMT session? In this thesis I look into the connection between religion and dance in the Pakistani context, I will discuss how the practise of Islam evolved in Pakistan post-independence and then during the Islamisation years during the 80s. I want to provide a coherent background to the attitudes to dance through an account of Pakistan's history as it is linked to religious practise. The negation of art and dance in Pakistan due to religious zeal has a special relevance for DMT interventions with women of this population.

1.2 Motivation

This thesis is an attempt to make sense of my relationship with dance growing up and how that is connected to my culture through my mother. My own relationship with dance has been precarious throughout my life because of my mother's attitude and insistence that "We don't do that". I was never allowed to join dance classes. My mother would forbid me from taking part in dance that was offered as part of music class, even though this was free and during school time. My relationship with dance is intertwined with my relationship with my mother, therefore I hope to gain more understanding of my relationship with my mother and dance through this thesis.

Dance was always present in my life, even though I had never been allowed to have formal training. I loved copying dance standing in front of the television as a toddler. I danced a famous Bollywood number at my childhood friend's henna ceremony, in a private, all female gathering – my mother wasn't there, of course.

When I eventually left home to go to University I loved going out to dance clubs where I would dance for hours at a time. My desire to move to music was still there, in spite of prohibition. It surprises me, when I look back, that I had left behind the Indian dances I had loved so much and only danced to non-formal European dance music. Even when I was older and independent it didn't occur to me that I could take dance classes. What had happened to the desire to learn classical Indian dances or go to formal training in contemporary dance? Years of prohibition had conditioned me. The voice of my mother was always there: If I was to be taken seriously as an educated Muslim woman in society I needed to be a doctor, lawyer, accountant or something similarly impressive, not a dancer.

I was well into my thirties, had a social sciences degree and had been working as a “respectable” accountant for many years before I went back to my first love and decided to make my living teaching dance.

When deciding on my area of interest for the thesis I remembered from the beginning of the training, how I had been curious as to how DMT could be applied with women from this background. I would try to imagine my mother being offered DMT and how she would have reacted. If being part of a DMT environment might have made her a bit more fun-loving and how different my life as a dance lover could have been.

I realise now is that I was travelling back in time to the beginning of my mother’s journey. This was when she came to Europe in the late 1960s to join my father in Manchester. I was not only focussing on the women who come over now but also reliving and trying to make sense of my mother in the same situation.

The practise sessions were sometimes difficult for various reasons: the sporadic attendance, the “not taking it seriously” as a therapy by the women, my frustrations in trying to follow the methodology of DMT sessions as we were studying, my doubts as to whether I was doing any DMT at all in these sessions and, most of all, the Transference/ Countertransference that was going on in these sessions. I would be reminded of or imagine my mother in some of the situations the women described to me. I would see a movie in my mind of “what if” situations where my mother was one of these women. I would try to imagine 1960s / 70s England and how the immigrant women were treated. I wondered if any integration programmes would have been in place. I would see the difference between the body language and level of general happiness, or lack thereof, in the women in the DMT sessions, and imagine how my mother would have been

when she newly arrived. Who was providing therapy for whom in these practise sessions? Did the reliving of my mother's situation help me netter understand the processes? At the end of it am I the person who has healed in a way?

1.3 Problem Statement

I will investigate Muslims attitudes to therapy in general. Religious belief can play an important part in a person's willingness to seek professional help for mental problems.

This dissertation explores Pakistani Muslim women's attitudes to dance. Why is it such a taboo?

I will investigate what Islam says about dance and music. What the scriptures say and what has been the interpretation of this in Pakistan and why. I want to know how this impacts women specifically. How does dance prohibition limit these women in expressing themselves? If we start off with women who are conditioned to not dance, to not express their wishes, to keep their bodies hidden, how are we going to get them into DMT sessions? Can DMT empower these women to feel some control over their own lives? Is there a way to adapt DMT sessions or name them in such a way as to attract these women to the sessions?

I feel that it would be beneficial to create special, private, female only DMT spaces where they can express themselves through movement for therapeutic purposes. I see a problem with the word Dance in this context because some of them will not come to sessions of DMT if they think they are coming to "sin". In my work placement practise, when I was trying to attract the Muslim women in the Espai Zareena, I emphasised the Movement and Therapy component much more. So it may be better to say "Movement Therapy" and not use the word "Dance".

1.4 Theory Statement

I feel there is a need for reaching out to migrant women from South Asia in general and Pakistan specifically with targeted programs for DMT interventions. I have seen that women from this background, especially if they are recent migrants, feel more comfortable around women of their own backgrounds in the same group. A culturally similar DMT practitioner, who speaks the same language could be an advantage or a non-culturally specific DMT with an interpreter if available. Even though the emphasis of DMT sessions is supposed to be on the non-verbal, dance and movement, it is difficult to have check-in and feedback if there is not a common language. Culturally specific music is another element to consider. Migrant women from South Asia will respond better to songs from Bollywood movies or Punjabi folkloric music (or other folkloric music that is specific to their region) than other types of music.

I used Spanish 80s pop in sessions at the Mental Health work placement where I was working with thirty to forty year old Spanish people. A colleague had to play reggaeton music in her DMT sessions with adolescents from mainly South American families. When working with people in old people's homes the DMT pioneers used ballroom music from the 40s and 50s is used, therefore there is already a tradition of using culturally specific music in DMT sessions.

Apart from the offering of culturally specific DMT, it is very important to note the resistance to dance and therapy from this population. People from rural India and Pakistan, male or female; do not have the same going out to dance in discos on the weekend culture as their European counterparts. Even though the Punjab region has a rich tradition of folkloric dances for all the different occasions, like the harvest festivals, or weddings and birth ceremonies; this tradition has been stamped out on the Muslim side. The women from Pakistan will be even more

resistant to dance due to their religious upbringing where leisure entertainment activities are prohibited. We need to find a way to reach this population.

My other question, related to myself is whether a culturally similar DM therapist, who has lived through similar problems, personally or through observation in her own family, can be an advantage.; if the “wounded healer” can contribute usefully in a DMT intervention.

1.5 Research Aims

Given that dance prohibition due to the cultural norms imposed on women from South Asia, I want to highlight and give importance to South Asian women as a population that can benefit from DMT interventions. I think the lack of literature on this topic could be due to not getting enough volunteers from this population in DMT sessions. I hope that my research into this topic can lay some groundwork for culturally specific targeting of South Asian migrant women and Pakistani women in particular for DMT interventions.

I want to give a background of Pakistani women’s lives, where they come from and the very important role that religion plays in how they are conditioned to think and behave. Their special circumstances should make them very interesting for future researchers. They are dependent, migrant women who have come to join their spouses in a new land often due to a transnational marriage. These marriages are more than likely to be involuntary because they are arranged by the families. By default this also means that they have not had much if any contact with their future spouse.

I feel that my highlighting of migrant women from South Asia might open the way for other studies relevant to their situation. Women from this background are taught to get on with their life without making too much noise. The arranged marriages they have entered into are the life chosen for them and their only option is to keep their head down and get on with it.

1.6 Overview of Chapters

In chapter 2 I will review the relevant literature. My starting point is Islam as the majority religion of Pakistan. The evolution of the way Islam was practised in British India to how it changed through successive Islamisation programs to make it how it is practised today in Pakistan.

In the second section of the literature review I will focus on the women migrants in particular; their family background, how they enter into transnational marriages, their education or lack thereof and how this influences in early marriages. I go on to talk about what these women can expect from their new life as opposed to expectations they may have had; how leaving behind all their loved ones can lead them to a life of loneliness and depression. I also want to highlight how all this added to not speaking the language of the new country leads to difficulties in integration.

In the third section I will look at mental health stigma in the Muslim community; how this can be a major factor in people from this community not taking care of their mental health. I try to find possibilities of therapies that have been offered to people of this population. Finally I look at Dance Movement Therapy and any literature relating to specific DMT interventions with Muslim women.

In the methodology chapter I will explain my work placement DMT sessions with South Asian migrant women. How I was able to offer the sessions to these women and their general attitude to dance in the sessions. I will give some more background of myself and my mother to situate myself in the research.

The next section of the methodology chapter will be about autoethnography as a research method. I will quote from different authors that justify my use of autoethnography in this dissertation.

In the findings chapter I will try to tie in my experience of the DMT sessions in my Master's work placement practise with my personal experience. I will give examples of moments that made me think of my mother's situation and if it was helpful to be of a similar culture to the women of the group.

At the end I will write the autoethnography. I will explain different moments in my mother's life, in my life in relation to my mother, in my life in relation to my mother and dance. This will also be tied in with my personal opinions bringing in the facts that were mentioned earlier in the literature review. I hope to present a well written account so that the reader can be a part of my world and understand some of the lives that I write about from the inside.

2 Review of Literature and Personal Knowledge

DANCE is the hidden language of the SOUL of the BODY

Martha Graham

Introduction

This literature review will take the form of a “layered account” where I will be recounting my personal experience “alongside the data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). For the nature of my auto-ethnographic research, it makes more sense to me if I give examples, accounts, and vignettes and reflect upon what I have read within the literature review.

According the Collins English Dictionary definition an “economic migrant” is a person who moves from one region, place, or country to another in order to improve his or her standard of living. By default, this means that the economic migrants who leave Pakistan to work in other countries are not part of the well to do classes. Pakistani women from poor families are usually not educated beyond fifth grade (Redman, 2017).

The women who are coming over to Spain to join their spouses come from poor or lower class backgrounds. Any money that the family has will be used to educate the boys or put aside to pay for the wedding of the girls. They are lucky if their families have educated them to the primary 5th grade standard. According to the Education for All Global Monitoring Report commissioned by UNESCO, fifty per cent Pakistani girls from poor backgrounds have never been to school (Redman, 2017).

They have been brought up to marry young and produce children. According to the Pakistan Demographic Health Survey (PDHS) 2012-13 35% of women were married by the age of 18 and 54% by the age of 20 years old. There is a defined rural/urban and no

education/education split. The average age for marriage for girls with no education was 18.5 years old compared to 22.3 years old for women who had completed secondary education (Farooq & Deen, 2016).

The transnational marriages that my sample of women enters into are with men who have come over to Europe in search of a better life. They are from villages or small towns with low job prospects. The men have come over due to lack of possibilities in their birthplaces. Some are from landowning families – it sounds strange but owning a piece of land does not mean that you are rich in Pakistan. In many cases the land has been mortgaged to pay people traffickers to help the young men emigrate or to finance the wedding of a daughter. The women who are coming over from Pakistan are usually from the same village as their husbands. They have had a marriage arranged by a matchmaker or by family connections. (Shaw & Charsley, 2006)

My mother was from a land-owning family. They were not rich in liquid cash but they could eat the chapattis made from the wheat from the land. They had buffalos for milk and hens for eggs. They could sell some of what they had for money to buy other things. She was from a traditional Muslim family where Islamic education was revered over formal education at school. She was home-schooled to read the Koran in Ancient Arabic, Islamic Instruction and she could read and write in Pakistan's national language, Urdu. My father's family were livestock owners, mainly camels for transporting goods and some buffaloes for milk production. They were not very religious. Their ancestors were nomads. My father couldn't read or write. He could just about sign his name for his documents. His family were more likely to have a rifle in the hand than a Koran. How did these two families become related? They were from two different villages. Their only common bond was being Muslims and they belonged to two different clans of the same ethnic group, "Gujjar".

Personal reflections

They were married by the matchmaking system called "watta-satta" exchange. In this system a brother and sister in one family marry the brother and sister of another family. This way neither family has to provide dowries as they simply "swap" a daughter from one house to the

other. It is usually a double wedding, so the family only has to pay for one wedding reception each whilst marrying off two of their children (Charsley, 2007).

I have found many articles on the need for a different approach for psychological counselling for Muslims and the role that religion plays in Muslim women getting access to this. (Gask, Aseem, Waquas & Waquas, 2011; Mir et al 2015; Rasool, 2015)

I have not been able to find many articles specific to Pakistani Muslim women and DMT. There are, however, studies on culturally and gender specific dance interventions with South Asians in Canada (Vahabi & Damba, 2015), and a chapter written by Anusha Subramanyam (Dokter, 1998) explaining interventions and the need for culturally specific DMT for South Asians. Subramanyam recognises the need for DMT sessions with women from South Asia with culturally specific music that is used in festivals and ceremonies throughout the region. It was difficult to find up to the minute academic papers relating to dance in Pakistan, therefore I searched for news reports from the last few years, which gave me information on the actual stance on dance in Pakistan (Kermani, 2010; Magsi, 2016; Sacirbey, 2012). It is important to focus on this, as the women from Pakistan who come over to join their husbands in Barcelona are coming from the current political climate.

I offered the DMT sessions to a women's association where migrant women came for free Spanish language classes. I was interested in this particular association specifically because they worked with women from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

From the moment I began to study the DMT Master's course, one question was always at the back of my mind, as to how I would apply what I was learning to women of the same background as my mother.

This *how* is not as easy as offering the course and sitting back as people sign up. Even if it is free, as part of my work placement, there were other factors to consider. I needed to consider how to get to this population of women who have come over to join their husbands from the Indian sub-continent; women who are dependent on their husbands, whose main “job” is to cook for and take care of his needs and who already have or are expected to have children. The husbands have had to go through many hardships to arrive in Spain, then have had years of illegality until eventually getting the good contractual job which has allowed them to bring over his spouse, and children, if they had any already. The men have networks of friends in the same situation as themselves and they have strong male bonded groups from years of being alone and fending for themselves in a foreign country. They have a strongly defined home life and outside-of-home life. When they have eventually been able to go back to their countries to get married or have been able to bring over an existing spouse, they expect the women to be home makers. They expect their dinner to be made on time and to have the children taken care off (Charsley, 2005).

My literature review covers the following points which I consider are relevant to dance, DMT and women in the same situation as my mother:

Section one is on Islam. Religion is important as is the religious point of view on dance. I emphasise the differences in the practise of Islam pre and post partition and the subsequent Islamisation programme in how it relates to women’s rights and dance in general. One would hope that Pakistan of today is more modern and very different from the Pakistan of my mother’s time. This is why I emphasise the religious element and the regression to fundamental Islam due to the Islamisation process in the 80s; and the negative impact on arts and dance and highlight the cultural stigmas attached to dance and women who dance.

Section two is about the migrant women. The women who are arriving from today's Pakistan. It is important to understand the dynamics of marriage in the culture they are from. Arranged marriages, transnational marriages, education or lack thereof, what they expect to come to in their new country and how this affects them is important.

Section three will look at mental health in the Muslim community, relating to stigma for people who are suffering from mental health, the possibilities of therapy specifically with women from this population and finally the possibilities of DMT.

2.1 Islam in General

Islam is the world's fastest growing religion. At the moment it accounts for nearly 25% of the world's population at 1.6 billion followers. Christianity has 2,4 billion followers (Desilver & Masci, 2017). Islam is a monotheistic religion as is Christianity and Judaism. We have the same stories as the Old Testament.

Muslims are taught to respect and revere Mary and Jesus, the same as all the prophets from the bible. They believe in the "one-ness" of God or Allah (Arabic equivalent of the word God). They differ from Christianity, in that they don't believe that Jesus is God's son. Muslims believe that the Koran that we read today is the exact same dictation that the Prophet Mohammed was given over the course of 23 years, without a single word changed. This is important for Muslims as they believe that they are practising the original, intended religion as closely as possible to the word of Allah. They don't want variations or modernizations of these words.

During the centuries after this revelation, different scholars in different parts of the eastern world interpreted the word into Islamic Jurisprudence which resulted in different schools of thought.

Sunni Muslims agree on the “Five Pillars of Islam” and they make up nearly 90% of the world’s

Muslim population:

Shahada: Bearing witness to the one-ness of Allah and the Affirmation of Mohammed as the prophet or messenger sent from Allah.

Salah: Praying five times a day

Zakat: Giving of alms, a portion of wealth donated to the poor

Sawm: Observing the 30 days of fasting during Ramadan

Hajj: Making the pilgrimage to the Holy city of Mecca at least once in a lifetime

(Macaulay-Lewis, 2018)

The Bareilvi school and Deoband school were the two main schools of thought in India.

The Bareilvi school was linked to Sufi culture, the pragmatism and mysticism of Islam. The Deoband school in the other hand took a more fundamentalist approach to Islam and didn’t believe in the nonsense of Saint’s shrines, or of singing and chanting to get closer to God. They promoted a more austere form of Islam (Kamran, 2006).

2.1.1 Islam in Pakistan

Islam arrived in the Indian subcontinent during the 7th century through the Arabic and Persian Gulf trade routes and the first mosque in India was built in Kerala in the south around that time. The 12th century Turkic invasions brought the religion to the northern regions. People indigenous to who converted to Islam brought their own culture with them and this was absorbed into their practises. This made the practise of Islam differ from country to country.

Islam could be more or less orthodox depending on the predominant school of thought in that country.

In Northern India, the Muslim ascetics at holy shrines helped to take the religion to the population. They practised a mystical form of Islam called Sufism.

“The term Sufism embraces the philosophy and practices which aim at direct communion between God and man, and those who practice Sufism are called Sufis” (Ghosh & Mir, 2016, p. 75). Sufis renounce all worldly goods and dedicate themselves to a life of austerity and contemplation of the universe in an attempt to get closer to God. There were many parallels between Sufis and Yogis (Hindu holy men) in this sense. Many low-caste hindus and artisans who converted to Islam from Hinduism took instruction from the Sufis. They helped to bridge the gap between the new religion and the converts. Their unorthodox interpretation of Islam made them more accessible to the common man and they helped in the spread of Islam in India. (Encyclopaedia, 2018)

2.1.2 Post-Partition: In my mother’s time

Pakistan became an independent nation on 14th August 1947 and was formed by partition from India. This was the last thing the British Raj did before decolonisation of India. The problems, the bloodshed, subsequent wars between India and Pakistan and ongoing dispute over the Kashmir region have been heavily documented (Hashim, 2014).

Post-partition my parents were already in the region now called Pakistan. My father’s family are not at all religious. They were from a Nomadic background and their children were streetwise and started work very early. This could be helping the adults feeding livestock or keeping an eye on them when they were in the fields. I don’t think I ever saw any of them go to a Mosque unless for a wedding or funeral. My mother’s family on the other hand prided themselves on being well educated and had made sure all their children had Islamic instruction.

The irony of this is that by today's religious standards in Pakistan my mother's way of practising Islam would be "too hindu"! I remember my mother's almost Sufi way of being religious. When we were ill or if something was not going well, she would make a promise to a certain Sufi saint (Ahmed, Wang, & Yao, 2018). A little like the Catholics do with their Saints.

There is a shrine very close to our village in Pakistan, where the Sufi saint was famous for curing skin diseases. I was probably twelve years old when I started getting skin discoloration and losing pigment from the skin on my neck. I now know that this is called Vitiligo. The doctor's creams were not working. I was worried that it would spread up to my face. My mother took the name of this Saint and said that she would ask someone to bring over some clay from the ground at this shrine. The miracle story was that this clay would have healing properties as it came from this shrine. Rubbing a little into the affected spot would cure the skin disease.

The clay was brought over; I rubbed it on the area every day, morning and night. Within a few weeks the patch of white almost disappeared, as my normal pigment came back, leaving a very small discoloured area as a reminder, which I can see even today. I don't know what happened. Whether the body self heals if you believe enough; or if I had some other skin problem that looked like vitiligo; or if the clay actually had some minerals in it that led to the healing. My European rational side looks for an explanation now but at the time I fully believed in what my mother thought as she often told us stories of Saints' miracles.

Personal reflection of an incident from 1980

The shrines that are dedicated to a Sufi Saint are places where "fakirs", holy men who have given up on worldly goods can sleep and are fed every day. They are caretakers of the shrines. Some of the bigger shrines have "Qawwali" singers on special days. Qawwalis are special songs about the glory of God, the beloved. They sound almost like Flamenco because of the way the voice is used. Some qawwali singers can get so caught up in the song that they get up and start spinning in a trance-like state as they are caught up in the divine ecstasy of feeling closer to God. (Jafri, 2016)

Sufism also encompasses the whirling Dervishes of Turkey who believe that spinning in circles brings them closer to the divine (Sansal, 2018).

Once the Saint has granted your wish or healed your problem then you send a donation of money through a third party or you can promise to visit the shrine on your next visit to lay rose petals on the Saint's grave and donate money. Batool et al explains the rituals, Mannat is when the promise is made to the Pir (Saint) in return for the solution and Nazrana is the fulfilment of the promise after the solution has been achieved (Batool, Chaudry, Shar, Nasir, & Farooq, 2015). Years later I did go to this shrine because it was close to our village in Pakistan. I also made it a ritual to go and visit at least one great Saint's shrine on each visit to Pakistan and also in India. On my first visit to India I went to the famous Sufi Saint *Moinuddin Chishti's shrine* in Ajmer – he is also known as Khwaja Gharib Nawaz - the prince of the poor. My mother had promised to this Saint when she was blessed with her only son. He was named Gharib Nawaz, the name of this Saint for protection.

My mother would say that if you put honest faith in a tree or even a stone, they could move mountains for you. She would often say this when we watched an Indian movie where the protagonist would have a miracle happen after praying to a statue of a Hindu God. Islam doesn't allow for Idol worship, therefore it surprised me when she said this. She was extremely religious. What I would call orthodox but not fundamentalist. I was always amazed by her pragmatic approach to other religions. Also her superstitions relating to the Sufi Saints would not be considered Islamic by real Orthodox Fundamentalist Muslims. We are supposed to communicate directly with God and not put our faith in any other being to intervene on our behalf. But the believers of Saint's miracles think that these people have a special place in God's grace. They had given up their worldly goods and spent their life in prayer and contemplation of the beauty of the universe and searched for enlightenment and a way to communicate with God.

2.1.3 Islamisation

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan struggled to come up with an identity to differentiate it from its neighbour India. India is still the country with the third largest population of Muslims in the world, after Indonesia and Pakistan.

When I was a child I found it strange that Indian movies depicted elaborate Qawwali sequences at holy Muslim shrines in India. There was usually a very honourable Muslim “Khan” who would help the hero fight the bad guys. In the 1980s a film, *Coolie*, (Desai, 1983) shows the most legendary Indian actor of all time Amitabh Bachchan’s Muslim character going on the pilgrimage to Mecca. I had understood that Pakistan had been founded on the premise that all Muslims would lose their rights and most likely be slaughtered by the Hindus after partition; that the Indians hated Muslims.

This was another contradiction that stayed in my mind. As a child of immigrants my exposure to the Indian sub-continent was usually through the Indian movies that we watched. There was a ritual of hiring a VCR player for a weekend during special holidays. My older sisters would have a list of the latest hits movies and they would have Indian movie marathons. All of these movies were musicals, what is now famously known as Bollywood. We would be exposed to the songs and dances typical of the region. My mother would sometimes say: “Look those fields are like the ones just outside of our village” or a dance sequence at a wedding would remind her of a similar ritual the women danced in the Punjab.

Pakistan has been under a military dictatorship for thirty-three of its seventy-one years of independence. (Khan, 2013) The rest of the time power has been shared with the two major parties: Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League (PML), both as corrupt as each other. (Waraich, 2017)

One of the country's most ambitious dictators, General Zia-ul-Haq, seized power with a military coup in 1977. He was a devout Muslim. He proceeded to dismantle the judicial system in place since British colonialism and replace it with Islamic laws. One of the most controversial was a set of laws called the "Hudood Ordinances", with many laws that went against the equality of women and included offences such as rape, adultery, theft and drinking of alcohol. (Murshed, 2012)

Haq "used Islam to legitimise his dictatorial rule" after seizing control of Pakistan in 1977 (Shah, 2012). This new era of becoming more Muslim was supported by the Wahabbi's (Salafists) of Saudi Arabia. The wahabbis interpretation of Islam is fundamentalist. They believe in adhering to literal translations of the Koran. Money poured in from Saudi Arabia to set up Madrassas for young boys – schools for Islamic instruction in this stricter, literal for of Islam. (Walsh, 2011)

There was an incident that I overheard my mother explaining to her friend. We had many readings of the Koran and food was blessed to be given out to our Muslim neighbours in Manchester. My mother had these readings on special dates such as the blessing of the dead or as a promise made for something important. This food would be blessed by the group of woman who would chant verses from the Koran. I was struck by one sentence in particular. She recommended my mother not to send the blessed food to a certain woman's house as they had converted to Wahabbi Islam and they would throw it in the bin. This is the worst insult to blessed food! So I understood that Wahabbi's did not entertain Sufi style superstitions and prohibited their followers from joining in these ceremonies or accepting the food blessed in them.

Personal reflection on an incident in 1983

I would sometimes hear my father shouting that someone's husband "is now a bloody Wahabbi!" I knew it had something to do with Saudi Arabia but was not sure.

Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab was an eighteenth century scholar who was scandalized by what he saw as people reverting back to ploytheistis ways by praying to Saints and revering holy men,

instead of praying directly to God. His followers were called Wahabbis by his detractors (Hameed, 2016).

2.1.4 Islam and Dance in Pakistan

Before the Islamization was officially implemented, Pakistan had Cultural centres and a few Dance schools. In 1981 the law against “Obscenity and Nudity” banned public performances of dance claiming that they were against Islam. Can you imagine people growing up in a country where dance, music and cultural expression are seen as a sin?

According to Sheema Khermani, a renowned Pakistani dancer, who still lives in Pakistan:

“A fundamental requirement for the development of the Performing Arts in general and for Dance in particular is a complete freedom of expression and thought. Arts can only exist in a society that is tolerant of divergent opinions and open to questioning on every conceivable aspect of life (Kermani, 2010, para. 54).”

She remembers how it was in Pakistan before the Islamisation process. In the years following Islamisation dance shows on television and dance parties at weddings were banned. Women news readers and commentators had to cover their heads with a veil.

This short history of the importance of Islam for Pakistan is a way to highlight the difference of people coming from this country. Pakistan is not the same as India, Bangladesh or even Morocco for that matter. Pakistan is a country where the women under the age of thirty have never known anything else. They have been taught that dance, music and enjoyment, amongst many other things are sinful. It is something they may see in Indian movies but that is what Indians do. Pakistanis are supposed to be different.

In Pakistani cinema or theatre, the dancers are recruited from the red light districts. So most of the women who are dancers are or have been prostitutes. Another population has also

filled the void left by prohibiting women's dance in Pakistan and that is the "hijra" or "she-male". A quick Youtube search with the keywords "Pakistani wedding shemale" will take you to shocking soft-porn, gyrations called dance at all male gatherings of men showering money on the dancers.

"In Pakistan, artists are looked down upon, but female artists are simply considered of no value. In the performing arts, women are presented as two kinds; one is the "family woman" who is considered pure, chaste, loyal and obedient, the other is the "professional artist" who is considered almost a prostitute (Kermani, 2010, para. 41)."

I have always been perceived as Indian Muslim by Pakistanis when they see that my surname is Muslim. In their minds there is no way that the daughter of a Pakistani Muslim would be a dancer. When I tell them that I am the director of my own dance school, they seem just a little more comfortable, as they can slot me into "teacher" or "business owner". This makes it more palatable for them. In the past I would let them assume that I was an Indian Muslim, as that required fewer explanations, but at some point I realised that the only way to change perceptions is by facing them head on.

Actually, my mother never knew that I made my living from dance. In her mind I owned a school, where I was probably teaching English to Spanish children. I did teach English for two years after arriving in Barcelona so I just never bothered to correct her. She would never have understood that a university graduate would choose to make her living by dancing. I am not sure if she knew anything of my dance activities prior to her death in 2015. Maybe she thought it was an extra-curricular activity that I did. In any case, my mother usually didn't ask questions if she knew that she wouldn't like the answer; and I usually omitted telling her things that would upset her.

2.2 Women migrants from Pakistan – general overview

The majority of the women that were in my sample in the DMT sessions have come to Spain through marriage. This is either because the men who migrated were already married or have gone back to their home country to get married, once they have received their residence papers.

Transnational marriages among the Pakistani community are the norm. In my own family, my three older sisters and my brother had their spouses chosen from Pakistan. In Spain, the present generation is expected to do the same. Pakistanis prefer to marry someone from back in their home country. They see this as a way of keeping traditional values alive and preventing cultural dilution. They do not usually look at the available pool of Muslim men or women in Spain or other European countries (Charsley, 2007).

In my family's case: one sister married a far off relative on my father's side of the family, one married my mother's favourite nephew (her sister's son and our first cousin) and one married a Pakistani who was in danger of being deported because of problems with his papers. In short all of these were marriages arranged to do a favour or to make closer ties of kinship with families in Pakistan. (Shaw & Charsley, 2006) My brother's marriage was arranged to a woman in Pakistan, a far off relative from my father's family. My mother was worried that he might forget about the family and lose his religion if he married his English girlfriend. I saw many friend's of my mother do the same. If their son's didn't go on to further education, if they couldn't hold down a job, or if they were getting mixed up in drugs and alcohol, their mother's arranged a marriage for them in Pakistan.

“They are taken to marry a Pakistani in the hope that this will bring them back to the desired path” (Charsley, 2005, p. 10).

Girls who were becoming too westernised or rebellious were often taken on holiday and forcibly married to someone in Pakistan as punishment. I had seen this happen too. I found it difficult to understand why someone would voluntarily go to get married in their country of origin because I had seen it used as a punishment in so many cases as I was growing up. Of course my experience was with children who were born and brought up in the UK. People like me. This is not the same sample as the men who are first generation immigrants who have closer ties to their homeland but it helps us understand the motivations that families or even the men themselves have in seeking brides from their country of origin.

Some of the men were already married before they started on their migration project. They have a wife and sometimes children waiting to be brought over to join them. The single men go back when they are able to and marry a girl from “back home”. This is in spite of what some would see as an easier life if they married a woman in the host country from within their own cultural group or from outside.

Studies on this population say that homesickness for their own country and customs can be a big factor. They want a spouse that they can communicate with. They want home cooked food that tastes like what their mother’s made. They want their children to be brought up in their own religion. They want a traditional stay-at-home wife. One respondent in the study with British Pakistanis, “Rishtas” questioned the morals of Pakistani origin girls who were brought up in the West, he would marry someone from Pakistan because he wanted “someone who won’t be going out all the time and who’ll always be there for me” (Shaw & Charsley, 2006 p. 14).

This is not just Pakistani Muslim men; I have friends from the Indian Punjab who have just come back from marrying a woman that the family chose for them. They have both had Spanish girlfriends here. After more than ten years of going through hardship to get their work papers, the first thing they both did was to go home and spend lots of hard-earned money on a traditional wedding with a woman chosen by their families. A few months ago I asked one of them why he hadn’t found a girl from here. He

had met someone a few years ago and it hadn't worked out. He had had casual relationships since then. He said his parents had found him someone and it would make them happy if he married her. Also he hadn't really found anyone else worth fighting with his parents. He was resigned to the fact that it was time. He is thirty years old and feels ready to have a family.

Personal reflections 2018

Sometimes they feel that marrying someone of their parents' choice is a way of "repaying debts" because of all the sacrifices that their parents have made for them. (Shaw & Charsley, 2006) p. 12. Some of the men send work papers to bring their families over and others go back to their home country and marry the "right" girl. These are the women that were my sample in the DMT sessions organised at the Espai Zarina.

2.2.1 Education

The economic migrants that have come to work in Spain are usually from small towns and villages in the Punjab of Pakistan. They are from humble families where daughters are usually either home-schooled in Islamic studies or pulled out of school after completing primary school at the age of eleven (Farooq & Deen, 2016). They are expected to help with household chores, learn to cook and be prepared for a suitable marriage by the time they are eighteen years old.

2.2.2 Expectations

What do the spouses expect to come to? Most of the men go through many risky situations in their migration journey to Spain. Once they finally arrive they find a network of other men who have been through the same process. They often have already contacted with other men from the same village or friends of friends. These men make sure that they have a place to sleep and food. Illegal work doesn't give much income but they learn to survive on very

little. They share apartments with many others – “*piso patera*” is the Spanish term for these apartments. Often they also have the system called “*cama caliente*” where four beds are shared by eight men; four are day shift workers and four are night shift workers. (Rallo, 2008) They cook together and look out for each other. This kind of social capital is what makes it easier for them to club together to open kebab takeaways and mobile phone shops once they get their legal papers.

The men don’t usually recount the realities of how they barely survive to their families. They still find a way to send a remittance of at least a hundred Euros a month to the parents. In many cases land or family jewellery has been mortgaged to pay human traffickers known as “agents” or “brokers” to get them from Pakistan to Europe. There is a high pressure on them to make money as quickly as possible to start paying back. Once they have paid off their debts they will start building up or improving property in Pakistan and create an image of being rich and successful in the country they have emigrated to.

This makes it easier for them to get a good marriage match arranged. It can be a culture shock to the new wives who arrive in Barcelona to a very small apartment, sometimes sharing with other family members of the husband. They may have come from the mansion that has been in Pakistan with foreign remittances. The reality in Barcelona is very different. According to one of the women in my DMT group, she is living in one room with her husband and son, whilst the other room in the apartment is occupied by her husband’s friend with his pregnant wife.

2.2.3 Loneliness

The migrant women have met the husband when he was on a month’s holiday. If they have got married at the beginning of his visit, they may have had a month to be together before he came back to Barcelona. Upon the husband’s return to Barcelona he has to go through the

process of family regroupment – reagrupación de familia. This can take time as the applicant needs to provide proof of work contract, and have an apartment contracted in his name as a minimum. Pakistani men don't want to have their wives in *pisos patera* so they need to have time to save up to get the apartment.

Once wives arrive in Barcelona, they find that they are spending a lot of time alone. The husband has to go out and work long hours. They are expected to cook, clean and happily receive the husband when he comes home. In most Pakistani families the wife is expected to be the homemaker and have children. She is not expected to go out to work; therefore she doesn't have the opportunity to make new friends through work.

Sometimes the spouses of the husband's friends can become a valuable ally and someone to turn to for advice on coping with the changes. If they are lucky enough to have this option, this can become the start of their social network. These days it is not as bad as during my mother's time in the 1960s or during my sister-in-law's time in the 1990s. At least a mobile phone provides instant family contact. Most houses in our villages in Pakistan have cable and internet connection. My mother would take Skype calls from my sisters in England when she was visiting Pakistan. Smart phones, social media and better internet connections have made life a little easier in that respect.

The migrant women leave everyone behind; their families, best friends, and their familiar surroundings. (Charsley K. , 2005) (Charsley K. , 2007) Even though they have phone contact, it's not the same as having the warmth of their families and friends. They often come from villages, from living in more open spaces, from having neighbours they have known all their lives to a place where they can't understand the language. Linguistic isolation is a reality. Most

Pakistanis have a basic understanding of English as an ex-colony, but Spanish is completely different. Their isolation is complete.

There are difficulties in making new connections. This differs between the Sikh Punjabis from India and Muslim Punjabis from Pakistan in the first instance, as observed by the women in my DMT group. The religious organisation is different. The Sikh temple (Gurdwara) is more like a community centre. I know of young men who have arrived in Barcelona and have slept on the Gurdawara floor in exchange for voluntary cleaning and helping with the cooking of food there. The Sikh women take an active role in the Sunday prayer meetings and on other special days (Waheguru.net, 2018). One of my sessions had very few women because the Sikh ladies were spending that afternoon organising food and the cleaning of the Gurdwara for a special ceremony that evening. They are not expected to cover themselves and stay at home. They meet other women in their situation very quickly at the Gurdwara and their social network is initiated. Sikh culture is more open and outward looking.

The mosque on the other hand is mainly a male environment (Green, 2017). Women are not usually involved in the volunteering there as men do that. During Ramadan the food is organised and distributed by young boys. Women are not expected to “exhibit” themselves to other men even in the mosque. Even though some mosques are like cultural centres that organise Spanish classes for newly arrived to help them integrate it is far from a social club.

The husbands don’t take a pro-active approach in the integration of their wives. In general, the husbands are out making money to pay off debts, pay for their life in Spain and to send money back to their parents in Pakistan. They do not have energy to be a support to their wives. The residency exams which require a basic standard of Spanish can be a good incentive to

send the wives to learn Spanish at the different women's association. These become a good source of basic support and a chance to make friendships with other women.

2.2.4 Depression.

A 2011 report on isolation and depression in women of Pakistani origin in Britain, found that depression was more common in the Pakistani origin women, 31.8% compared to white Europeans living in Manchester, 19.3% (Gask, Aseem, Waquas, & Waquas, 2011, pág. 49). Deterioration of mental health due to social isolation leading to loneliness, unhappy marriages leading to sadness, lack of family support after having a child and intergenerational conflict are some of the reasons cited as “culturally specific vulnerability factors”.

Joseba Achotegui is a well-known psychiatrist and psychotherapist, who is also professor at Barcelona University. In 2002 he coined the phrase: *The Ulysses Syndrome*, “an atypical set of depressive, anxious, dissociative and somatoform symptoms that results from being exposed to extreme levels of stress unique to the process of modern migration”. No investigation about the psychology of migrants would be complete without referring to his important work.

He describes migrants as suffering from migratory grief. This in itself can be assumed by the immigrant as people have been migrating for centuries but the risk factors: Personal factors of vulnerability, like bad health or disabilities and external factors such as high stress factors or a hostile environment. (Achotegui, 2009)

Achotegui lists seven “types of grief”:

Leaving behind family and friends

Different language

Culture, traditions, religion, values

Land: the landscape, colours, smells, light

Social status: legal papers, accommodation, work, upward mobility

Contact with the host community: prejudice, xenophobia, racism

Physical danger: dangerous journeys, risk of expulsion, defencelessness

All of these different factors apply to migrant women who come to Spain through a transnational marriage too. Even though they don't have to go through the difficult and dangerous journey to arrive in Europe as the husbands have done; there can be other types of danger they can feel.

Perceived or real hostility from their environment or not knowing what is being said around them can be a stress factor.

In cases of domestic abuse some women will feel that they have to make the marriage work against all odds. Being returned back to where they came from would bring shame to their families. In Gask et al (2011) one woman said that she was isolated because her husband would not allow her to leave the house. This sense of isolation could have contributed to the onset of depression.

Another contributing factor that is mentioned by Achotegui: ambivalence about the country the women come from and where they are. Many women from Pakistan may feel fortunate to have the chance of a better life for their future children but hate the fact that they had to leave their family and friends. On the other hand they may grow to enjoy the new country but hate the fact that they don't feel integrated owing to language, religion and culture.

There may also be things that they will never accept as right about the host culture. When we were adolescents, my mother would use the phrase "like these English people" to insult us if we were not behaving like good Muslim girls. Even after 40 years of living in England there were still many things that she thought were wrong for us to emulate. She accepted that the

English would allow their children to behave a certain way but her own children would be brought up “properly”.

Intercultural confrontation between the migrant and people of the host country can also affect migrant’s mental stability (Oncina, Benito & Casado, 2008). Women’s desires to fit in with the new culture can be at odds with their desire to maintain and not “lose” the culture of the country they came from. Sometimes, even if they are willing to assimilate more, their husbands or other family members may make it difficult for them (Oncina et al, 2008, p. 91).

2.3 Mental health stigma in the Muslim Community

In Gask et al (2011) “the stigma of depression” is cited as a factor that contributed to further isolation of women, who were too embarrassed and ashamed to let others know of their depression. Oncina et al (2008) cites stigma of being perceived as crazy by their community members as a reason for not accessing Mental Health Services Centres. Migrants come to the Centres when they have exhausted all other resources available to them (p.89).

In January of 2018, a newspaper article was printed in the British newspaper, The Independent, with the headline “As a Muslim, I wish people would stop telling me that I can just ‘pray away’ my mental health problems” (Sikdar, 2018). It is disheartening that a community that has been in the UK since the 1960s still holds onto this way of thinking. That if you can’t deal with these “tests” from God then your faith must be weak. The writer goes on to say that talking about mental illness holds a lot of stigma. Families feel that they will be tainted if they admit to having a mentally ill person in the family. In some cases this may affect the marriage possibilities of children from the same family. They tend to keep the mentally ill behind closed doors so they are less likely to ask for help.

The article mentions two other studies that have been done with the South Asian (in the UK South Asia refers to people whose country of origin is Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka) population in the UK: Family Matters (Time to Change: Family Matters, 2010) and the Black Spaces Report (Wright & Hutnick, 2003).

Family Matters expands on the theme that is touched on in the newspaper report above. Time to Change is a campaign about mental health awareness for the British public in general. The pilot project works with BME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic) groups but recognises that each community needs to be targeted in different ways. The Family Matters report addresses issues specific to the South Asian community; the feelings of shame and fear that lead to secrecy around mental illness. Focus groups and interviews with members of the South Asian produced the results for a targeted social marketing campaign. They found that apart from the shame and secrecy surrounding mental health issues, people didn't really understand the causes of mental illness. There is a devaluation of people with mental health problems that can lead to not only problems for this person to find a suitable marriage partner but also affects other family members' prospects. The South Asian community, in general, still adheres to the arranged marriage system, even after many generations of living in the UK.

The resulting age group for targeting is the middle-age, 30 – 50 year olds. According to the report the under 30s group already has some understanding of mental health issues and the older people have attitudes so ingrained that it makes more sense to use the resources for the middle-age group.

The findings of the report create a protocol of age specific targeting and suggests various avenues to do this; information posters and leaflets, plays, Asian specific media and information stands at South Asian community events.

The Black Spaces report goes into more details as it provides information on coping strategies. It is a second analysis of interviews taken from a 2000 report commissioned by the Mental Health Foundation (UK) with ten South Asian women who have used the mental health services. (Faulkner, 2000) This report is interesting because it takes us into the mindset of the South Asian community. The women talk about what it means to “be Asian in western society” (p.5), how mental illness can lead to shame and the way this can affect the social standing of the family.

In the South Asian community women are seen as the “guardians” of honour but they are also the “guarded” (Faulkner, 2000, p.6).

As a child, there were many times where my sisters and I were frustrated at statements my mother would make. An example is dress code; usually in our family as long we were modestly covered up we weren’t expected to wear eastern clothes or to cover our heads. My mother got very worried and stressed when my father let us buy jeans. She saw them as boy’s or white women’s wear. At our insistence that she look and tell us if we were exposing body parts or dressing contrary to her religious beliefs, she told us that the neighbour’s would talk about us as loose girls for wearing jeans. That they would say we were behaving like the English girls. She taught Koran readings to neighbours children and thought it would look bad on her and the family if we wore jeans. We were lucky that our father didn’t give in to overzealous religious interpretation and we wore the jeans. Even though this upset my mother, we reasoned with her, saying that if our religion depends on a pair of jeans then we cannot be of strong faith.

Personal reflections 2018

Bringing up children who are sometimes at odds with the mother’s beliefs can be a stress factor for the migrant woman. This fairly innocuous altercation with my mother illustrates how what the community thinks and the rules the community makes for you can be a stress factor. We were lucky to have at least one parent who didn’t adhere to strict codes of religion. My mother never questioned what my brother wore. This gender bias can be seen in the Muslim dress code through the world. Men can usually dress in the way of the country they live in but the onus is on women to uphold their religion by dressing in certain clothes.

The Black Spaces report focuses on this gender bias as a factor leading to mental stress. Women are expected to conform to traditions. Another stress factor is social isolation of the new migrant who doesn't have the language skills or a supportive family network. Their dependence on the husband for everything can sometimes lead to abuse in the relationship. What was interesting in this report were two different stories of domestic abuse where the woman was the victim; one woman had come over from Pakistan through a transnational marriage and the other was British-born and her husband had been chosen for her from Pakistan. Both these women reported domestic abuse from their partner. Therefore even women who would supposedly have a family network and friends in place often feel the need to uphold traditions and endure a violent relationship so as not to bring shame on the family.

Recent studies with the immigrant population both in Andalusia (Sayed-Ahmed Beiruti, García Galán, & González Rojo, 2008) and Catalonia (Sayed-Ahmed Beiruti, 2013) echo the stressors that lead to mental health problems for migrant women; family, social and economic factors, for example. Expectations from the move to a new country can be unrealistic for some women who come from communities where women are expected to stay at home and not go out to work. They may have come to Europe through marriage expecting to have more freedom from the traditions only to find that this does not change. They find themselves more reliant on the husband as they are far away from their family and friends' network in Pakistan.

Migrant women don't actively seek help for mental health problems. If they come from countries or of a social class that doesn't seek outside help for mental health, it is less likely that they will use these services. They may not even share their feelings with others from their own community for fear of stigma or being called mad. Add to that the fact that their closest family and friends are thousands of kilometres away then it is understandable that they feel isolated.

2.4 Integration

The migrant women lack the language for communication. It will not be easy for them to learn a new language if they have not had the opportunity to go to school as a child. If, like my mother, they are home-schooled only in religious instruction, they will be able to read Arabic script and by default Urdu – both these languages have a similar script. This may make it easier for them to learn a new language. Social exclusion is a big problem for women who come from countries with a different language, religion and culture. Integration is necessarily a two way operation. The host society and the migrants both have a role to play, although it not equal.

Migrationpolicy.org gives the following definitions for integration:

“Integration is the process by which immigrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups.”

There are two parties involved in integration processes: the immigrants, with their characteristics, efforts and adaptation, and the receiving society, with its interactions with these newcomers and their institutions. (Penninx, 2003)

Intercultural confrontation or xenophobia from the host society will also play a big role in this dynamic. In the current world political climate with regards to terrorist organisations like the So-Called Islamic State (SCIS) or ISIS, we cannot ignore Islamophobia. Men usually wear western clothes when they go to work or in their daily lives. Their spouses however are expected to adhere to the dress codes from their own countries. This already creates a visual barrier. Culture is supposed to be an identity strengthening and protection factor for mental health but in this case society's rejection because of the migrant woman's culture and religion can seriously affect her desire to integrate into the new society. (Sayed-Ahmed Beiruti, García Galán, & González Rojo, 2008)

2.5 Possibilities of Therapy

The population we are highlighting does not usually have any experience with interventions for mental health. People who come from working class backgrounds who are forced to become economic migrants are of a “getting on with it” mentality. They do not prioritise taking care of mental health.

In Europe there are well developed protocols for mental health of immigrants. Between the UK (Time to Change: Family Matters, 2010) (Wright & Hutnick, 2003), Andalusia (Sayed-Ahmed Beiruti, García Galán, & González Rojo, 2008) and Catalonia (Sayed-Ahmed Beiruti, 2013) reports I found many similarities. One of the main ones is getting to migrant women from the most basic level which is women’s associations.

For example: the women who came to my DMT sessions for my work placement. They were coming to the twice weekly free Spanish classes. I saw many ways in which the local council tried to get information to the ladies through these associations during the observation phase of my work placement. A circular would be sent out, it could be about a talk on Integration, filling out forms for voting registration, vaccination for children or encouraging women to get early checkups for health problems. The person who came with the information would very patiently explain the times of the session, they would make sure that it was in the same time slot as the Spanish class so women didn’t have to come especially and they would also have a cultural mediator who would act as an interpreter for the women who didn’t speak enough Spanish yet. This is a great example of the willingness to work on integration of migrant women.

The protocols for working with migrant women from South Asia have to be multidisciplinary; as they will not usually recognise nor ask for help with mental health.

Women's associations, social educators/social workers, doctors (GP general practitioner in the UK), hospital workers and Emergency ward staff (Urgencias – ER). These would be the main points of contact for migrant women. This protocol needs to include the sociocultural context. Sayed-Ahmad Beiruti recommends that special attention be given to the Migrant's Loss or Grief (Dol Migratori) by not only helping but also in prevention: a social health programme that is “integral, intersectional and transversal” (Sayed-Ahmed Beiruti N. , 2013, p.99).

2.6 Cross cultural therapy

The Black Spaces report (Time to change, 2010) cited women as feeling shame and fear about mental illness and about how this could affect personal marriage prospects. Indeed other reports back this up, with Muslim women refraining from seeking help due to the adverse effect this may have on their marital prospects or how it may affect the marriages they are in (Cifti, Jones & Corrigan, 2013).

Sayed-Ahmad Beiruti (2013) emphasises a “Socio-Sanitary in Diversity” approach to mental health in immigrant communities.

“Intercultural intervention has to keep in mind the socio-cultural context where the demand has taken place, and maintain an attitude of dialogue, flexibility and symmetry, even though it may be asymmetrical without being hierarchical (p. 99).”

Author's own translation from the Catalan original

Here the mental health caregiver must keep the role of the family in mind, as well as the origins of conflicts and the migratory grief problems that are unique to the immigrant population.

Muslim women become an even more specific group within the immigrants and mental health. Their needs for gender specific treatments due to modest dress codes and segregation of the sexes mean that they will not access mental health services unless a female health practitioner is available. A cross cultural sensitivity means that the health practitioner should be

aware of Muslims ideas that illness is a test of faith or that illness is God-given and God will find the way to make them better (Rasool, 2015; Tackett, 2018).

Mir et al (2015) is a report on adapted, culturally specific interventions in the treatment of depression in Muslims. The importance of religious identity for Muslims is emphasised and the awareness that psychological practitioners “are less likely to hold religious beliefs” (p. 191).

There were mixed review of evidence for “patient-therapist matching”. The positives were quick openness and trust development, shared metaphors, more understanding of behaviours and values. The downside was the potential for the patient feeling judged by a health practitioner of their own background or the perceived lack of confidentiality. Patient- therapist matching could also lead to a crossing of boundaries. More training is needed for “effective engagement, regardless of background” p. 192).

“Without knowledge of the kind of cultural background of the patient, and religious background of the patient, it’s very difficult to engage them. The language they speak, sometimes, they use different metaphors or things like that (...) which are not understood by people from other cultures.”

Opinion of a clinical psychologist on patient-therapist matching (Mir et al, p. 193).

2.7 Dance

Dance and Movement are the important components of DMT. It is important to contextualise the demonisation of entertainment which includes music and dance in countries that adhere to a more fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. There is a possibility that for some of the women who have been brought up in post-islamisation Pakistan, dance or any form of entertainment and enjoyment as sinful. In fact this direct quote from an eminent scholar of Islamic jurisprudence, Ayatullah Sistani, from Al-Islam.org, gives an idea of Fundamentalist interpretations of the Koran:

“(1) He also said, “Whoever listens to the entertainment (song and music), lead will be melted inside his ear on the day of judgement.” (2) He also said, “Singing and music are enchantment for adultery.” (3) That is, it is a stepping stone or a way that leads to adultery. It is permissible for a woman to dance in front of her husband to please and arouse him. But it is not permissible for her to dance in front of other men; based on obligatory precaution, she must not dance in front of other women also.” (Sistani, downloaded 2018)

I looked for recent literature about the status of dance and dancers in the region and had to rely on newspapers reports, as I could not find much academic writing in this regard. A 2012 report in the Washington post “Are Muslims allowed to Dance? Depends on who you ask” starts off with the beheading of seventeen people by the Taliban in Afghanistan for the crime of mixed gender dancing. (Sacrirbey, 2012) The report goes on to interview people with different stances on dance, ranging from outright prohibition from an Imam who says that Muslims should emulate the life of the prophet Mohammed, if he never danced, then Muslims shouldn’t. Some people felt that it was a grey area as there is no mention of dancing in the Koran. Another Imam states that it is not the dancing itself but “the way of dancing”. The Muslim Sufi order is world famous for the Whirling Dervishes of Turkey. For them moving in this way brings them closer to the divine. One of the surprises in this article is the voluntary retirement from public performance by an American lady, Khadija Anderson. She gave up dancing in public for ten years due to feeling that it “violated her new faith”.

Two newspaper reports on attacks by Muslim fundamentalists as recently as 2017 are eye-openers. 305 people were killed by the “so-called Islamic State” - SCIS (also known as ISIS) at the Al-Rawdah mosque in the Sinai in Egypt, their “sin” was that this mosque had many worshippers linked to a Sufi order. According to ISIS Sufism is a “heterodox form of Islam” therefore it is correct to kill Sufi muslims. (Hellyer, 2017)

Early on in the same year, 16th February there was an attack on one of Pakistan's most famous Sufi shrines, "Laal Shahbaz Qualander" (Brehmer, 2017). A suicide bomber took the lives of 88 people, including women and children during the "dhamaal". The dhamaal is the whirling ritual that Sufi muslims take part in, similar to the dance of the whirling Dervishes of Turkey. This shrine is famous for its religious plurality as it is very important for Sindhi Hindus and it is also one of the few places where women and men can dance in the same rituals. The festival at Laal Shabaz Qualander can be seen as a welcome respite for most Pakistanis from social regulation. The experience of letting go and dancing can be seen as an "experience of freedom and lightness" which responds to the "human desire for ecstatic experience". This is completely against literal, fundamentalist readings of an austere Islam. The report underlines what I already expressed above; this is an imported Saudi, salafist version of Islam – an "ultra-orthodox reading of Islam". They forbid participation of women and of non-muslims in Muslim places of worship.

In a 2016 interview in the Pakistani newspaper, Dawn, renowned Pakistani classical dancer Sheema Kermani reflects on this prohibition of dance for women:

"...Muslim men see my dancing as a challenge to them! To the Muslim male a woman who is standing on stage with confidence and dignity, is, they think, saying to them (that), 'Here I am; I am proud of my body and I do not fear you.' And this is totally unacceptable to them." (Magsi, 2016, para. 10)

Kermani has received death threats for being a dancer. She explains that she often checks to make sure someone is not going to attack her when she goes out dressed up for a performance. Bomb threats at dance venues or people not wanting to sit next to her for being a dancer are part and parcel of her life in Pakistan but she chooses to stay there to try to make a difference.

Speaking at the Dance and Identities conference in Paris in 2006, Khermani made several points related to the arts and dance in Pakistan. She explains how she must go through censorship before presenting a dance performance in the form of a “No Objection Certificate”.

“In its search for a cultural identity as apart from the cultural identity of India, Pakistan has looked upon the art of dancing with suspicion. It has continuously been claimed by the official authorities that dance is not part of Pakistani culture” (Kermani, 2010, para.13).

I explain the negative effect of these dance prohibitions in my DMT sessions below (see section 4.2 DMT sessions).

2.8 Dance Movement Therapy

According to Helen Payne in the Introduction of *Dance Movement Therapy: Theory and Practise*:

“Dance movement therapy is the use of creative movement and dance in a therapeutic alliance. It uses the relationship between motion and emotion as a vehicle through which an individual can engage in personal integration towards a clearer definition of self.” (Payne, 1992)

DMT has been successful alleviating stress and depression, which are some of the symptoms that migrants suffer from. A randomized control trial was done in Germany with the participation of eleven DM therapists across the country. They provided DMT for groups of a 10 week duration and charted the results that showed a significant improvement in stress management strategies (Bräuninger, 2012). DMT was deemed to be “more successful than non-treatment” and an “innovative and successful treatment of stress” (p. 449).

A further study in the form of a randomized control trial, charting the effects of DMT on the quality of life measuring six factors physical health, psychological health, level of independence, social relations, environment and spiritual/personal/religious beliefs showed an improvement in all six factors after the 10 week DMT intervention (Bräuninger, 2012b).

Referring back to the difficulties that migrants face which contribute to the migratory grief

(Achotegui, 2009) DMT could be a very important intervention to improve their quality of life, thereby having a positive effect on their mental health.

Subramaniam (in Dokter, 1998, p. 183) writes that as DMT is a group activity it could alleviate the isolation of women, who otherwise would not have many occasions to engage “pleasurable events outside the house”. DMT sessions can offer a supportive environment for women who have left behind all their friends and family; who cannot participate in festivals and special occasions with those friends and family.

2.9 DMT with Women from Pakistan

I did many searches using keywords DMT, Dance Movement Therapy and Pakistani Women. I didn’t find anything specific except for one chapter written for the book “Art Therapists, Refugees and Migrants: Reaching across borders” in 1998 by Anusha Subramanyam (Dokter, 1998). She highlights some of what I found in other publications regarding the villages where the women came from, the concept of honour, the concept of loneliness when a woman leaves her family to migrate and be with her husband. She speaks about all the South Asian community but not specifically about Pakistani women. She opens the debate about the specific needs for psychotherapy services aimed at women from South Asia and the possibility of using DMT with them. She puts the group dynamics in a DMT session into the context of women getting together, dancing and moving together as they may have done traditionally in religious ceremonies and festivals in their villages. She emphasises the importance of having a group where the women can socialise and gossip, without putting a therapeutic label on it; it might be more important to gain trust and create a group before going on to try a more conventional DMT session.

A feasibility study was commissioned in the Greater Toronto area with South Asian women and physical activity. It was a Gender-specific dance intervention to promote physical activity and presents some interesting ideas. (Vahabi & Damba, 2015) Even though it is not specifically dance movement therapy, I think using dance to promote physical health could be a good starting point. I found many parallels to my DMT sessions with the women's association: the use of culturally specific music (Bollywood), I used a mixture of traditional Punjabi folkloric music and Bollywood music; the study had a facilitator of the same ethnic background; and taking the women's convenience into account when scheduling the classes, as I also did scheduling my sessions to coincide with the children's school hours. Another incentive that made it easier for the women to participate was by offering a free bus pass for the women to reach the location of the sessions. Note that I am not advocating for only culturally specific DM therapists, I am only stating the similarities between the Canadian study and my own DMT work placement sessions.

This study includes all the South Asians, including Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Nepalis and Sri Lankans. Upon checking the figures of take-up and drop-outs it was disheartening to note that, much the same as my DMT sessions, there was a lack of take up from Pakistani women. 78% of the participants in this study were of Indian origin and most likely to be Hindu rather than Muslim.

It is interesting that a study of these characteristics has been recorded. It makes me think of the possibilities of expanding on a similar study but with DMT. I could use the experience of the DMT sessions at the work placement as a starting point.

Conclusion

On reviewing the literature it has become clear to me that the Pakistan of my mother's time, far from modernising, has gone backwards when it comes to the arts and dancing and not only on women's rights' issues. The economic migrants who arrive in Spain are from this Pakistan. My mother's views on dance seem very pragmatic if I compare them to the current climate in Pakistan. I dread to think how it would have been for me, as a child who loved dancing, growing up in today's Pakistani family.

Mental health stigma and the need for cross-cultural is an important factor when considering intervention with this population.

I still have not been able to answer the "how" part of my question in regards to DMT interventions with a population that has been brain-washed to think of dance as sinful. However, I am convinced more than ever that DMT would be very useful for women migrants from Pakistan.

In the methodology section I will discuss why autoethnography seems the right choice for this thesis. It is based on my personal experiences growing up in the same culture as the women who I focus on for the DMT interventions.

3. Methodology

If you STUMBLE make it part of the Dance
Anonymous

This is a qualitative study with three points of view:

- My mother (Pakistan, 1931 – 2015) as an example of a Pakistani woman who immigrated to the UK in 1966, a couple of years before I was born.
- Me, the daughter born to Pakistani Muslim parents living in the UK. My witnessing and lived experience in relation to my mother and my relationship with dance.
- My clinical placement in at the women's association at the *Espai Zarina*, (not the real name) in Barcelona, and the women who were part of the DMT sessions with a similar background as my mother.

My dissertation is mainly of an autoethnographic nature. It encompasses a collection of the narratives/descriptions of my experiences during my second year work placement. I am the bridge between my mother's experiences as a migrant to the UK, in the 60s, and the women who are recent migrants to Spain.

I highlight what I felt, during the DMT sessions. I discuss the moments that brought up memories of my mother's stories and the moments made me remember my own stories in relation to my mother. The autoethnographic point of view is important for me as a child growing up aware of my mother's stories, her ideals, her memories and her idiosyncrasies. I watched her navigate her new world, from her own strict religious upbringing. I know her thoughts and what made it difficult for her to integrate into her new country. I have a lived experience of her rejection of a world she didn't like nor understand; of her desire to recreate her old world inside the home, her insistence that we spoke only our mother tongue, Punjabi, to her;

her rules that we change into our traditional clothes at home, even if we refused to wear them on the streets. She tried to bring us up with a strong identity so that we were not “lost” to the western world outside. This is first-hand knowledge that helps me to understand what women in a similar situation from the same country as my mother might be feeling.

Background of the Women

I offered DMT sessions for migrant women from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh (the Indian sub-continent). They were all married and the majority of them had children at the local primary school. These women had come from their home countries to join their husbands already living in Spain. In the majority of cases migrant men from the Indian sub-continent are either unmarried or leave their spouses (and children, if they have any) in their home countries. They prefer to go through all the hardships involved in the often dangerous journey to Europe alone. Once these economic migrants get their work papers and are settled in the new country, they take advantage of the “*Reagrupación de Familias*”¹ law which gives them the right to bring spouses and children to join them in Spain.

Those who are married start the process of bringing their spouses or families over to live with them in Spain. The single men go back for the first time after many years of being away to be presented to the future spouse, that the family has chosen for them. Most of them will get married on this first visit back home as it is costly to go back and forth. Others may get engaged and then come back to Spain to work and save money for the big wedding. I explain all this so that we can better understand the women from the Spanish classes at *Espai Zarina* who came to the DMT sessions.

¹ Ley Orgánica 4/2000, de 11 de enero, sobre derechos y libertades de los extranjeros en España y su integración social (artículos del 16 al 19)

3.1 The Setting

Espai Zarina has a centre that is made up of classrooms for Spanish and Catalan language courses and a computer room for classes of how to use social media. There wasn't a suitable space for my sessions there. The coordinator of the *Espai*, who was also my work placement tutor, negotiated a private space, adequate for DMT in a Civic Centre very close to their offices. The women who attend the classes at the *Espai* all live in this neighbourhood. The *Espai* is also conveniently close to the primary school. We had to make it as easy as possible for the women to attend the DMT sessions.

I organised twenty six sessions of one and a half hours per session twice a week – Mondays and Wednesdays. The women already had Spanish class Tuesday and Thursday morning and Zumba on Friday afternoon. I timed the DMT sessions to start fifteen minutes after school drop-off times and they finished fifteen minutes before school pick-up time. It was very important to factor convenience into the setting if I was to get enough volunteers for the sessions. I aimed to form a DMT group of between eight to ten women.

3.2 Autoethnography as a research method

auto: self-reflection
ethno: to explore people's experiences
graph: to write, to make an image,
 to perform a script that I (or you) create;
autoethnography: bending the past to the present;
 I write my way into and through my experiences;
 I treat myself as a universal singular;
 I devise a script and play myself.

Denzin (in Turner, et al, 2018, p.36)

Autoethnography is “research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to cultural, social, and political”; it “claims the conventions of literary writing” because of inclusion of “dialogue, scenes, characterization, and plot.” (Ellis, 2004 preface).

Doing auto ethnographic research is a way of examining phenomena from my own point of view as a child brought up by a mother in a similar situation to the women of my DMT group (Méndez, 2013). I can use my experience and my mother’s recounted experiences to help others understand the culture of migrant women from the Indian Subcontinent (Holt, 2003).

According to Sparkes (2000) cited in Wall (2006, p.2) autoethnographies are “highly personalised accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding”. I hope that I can give voice to my mother and to women like her. This method will help me make a culturally relevant contribution through my personal experience. It allows me to be subjective and empathetic whilst presenting a small parcel of knowledge that I know of due to being of the same culture as the women I speak of (Speedy, 2005).

I go back and forth between my mother’s stories, personal observations of them, my personal stories of visits to Pakistan, where I was briefly exposed to my mother’s world; and thoughts that I had after my DMT sessions with women of a similar background as my mother. I will try to put these experiences into a broader context (McIlveen, 2008).

I tell the stories of my mother and women like her, they have the “right to tell their truth as experienced without waiting for others to express what they really want to be known and understood” (Mendez, 2013 p. 282). In this “educating” of others I also learn more about my mother and women in her situation. This, in turn, helps me know more about myself. In an

evocative ethnography I want readers to connect to what I am writing and to come with me on this introspective journey.

This dissertation is autoethnographic because it is a firsthand account of my thoughts and experiences as I worked with the women. It is also tied back to my personal experiences growing up as the daughter of a Muslim Pakistani woman who went through the same experience in 1960s England. This study presents vignettes of moments with my mother that I can illustrate and help me understand certain moments and behaviours during the DMT sessions. At the same time I draw on events and comments that the women made during the sessions.

It is a lived experience of myself as a bridge between my mother and the women who formed part of the DMT group during my work placement. Auto ethnography aims to give validity to my “inner dialogue”, the data includes my “participant observations (and) reflective writing...”

(Wall, 2006) p.7.

3.3 Concept of the Wounded Healer

Many questions, ideas and memories of my own upbringing came up during my work placement. Sometimes I had to stop and consider if I was going through countertransference or projecting my mother's stories on a situation. Writing my personal stories was also a therapeutic process for me. It helped me understand parts of my upbringing and come to terms with some of my experiences. I will be able to understand and analyse the stories (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, *Autoethnography An Overview*, 2011).

I watched my mother navigate her new world as a migrant South Asian woman. This helped me better understand and empathise with the situation of the women that I worked with in the DMT sessions. I was able to draw from the stories of my mother in parallel to the stories of

the women. I was also able to empathise with women who come from stricter, religious families and have no dance experience due to my own upbringing.

In ‘Celebrating the wounded healer’, Martin (2011) writes about therapists who have been through traumatic experiences and how they have been useful for them in their practise. He quotes Lipp (1980) on the Jungian archetype of the *wounded healer*

“...my wounds become my spectacles, helping me to see what I encounter with empathy, and with a grateful sense of privilege” (Martin, 2011, p. 13)

He states that we need to be able to recognise our own experiences or wounds as something other than weakness. We are human and thus we are not perfect. We have also lived and had experiences, or we have been close to someone who has had experiences, some good and some bad and avoidance is not the way to heal ourselves. “Perhaps ‘woundedness’ is just another metaphor for our humanness?” (Martin, 2011, p. 12)

In “The Dilemma of the Wounded Healer” (Zerubavel & O'Dougherty Wright, 2012) a case is made for psychotherapists to come forward to fight the stigma and self-stigma associated with their own wounds. The psychotherapists “ability to draw on woundedness in the service of healing” and to understand their own recovery process that helps them understand their own wounds can put them in a “better position to ... guide others through such a process” (p.482). This thesis became a way for me to understand my healing process to the “wounds” I had sustained as I was growing up.

3.4 In the DMT Sessions

I am the Dance Movement Therapist (in training) of all these sessions.

I am also a member, a “cultural insider” of the same ethnic group as the majority of the participants.

I have a shared mother tongue with the majority of the group. I conducted the checkin verbal segments of the sessions in a mixture of Punjabi-Urdu-Spanish-English.

I am of the same religion – Islam, as some of the group.

My mother was in the same situation as these women when she came over to England to join my father in 1967. I have memories of her accounts.

My brother had an arranged marriage to a woman in Pakistan who came over to join him in England in 1990. I have memories of how she tried to cope with the changes in her situation and their relationship struggles.

I wanted to open the discussion focussing on women migrants from South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular; to educate and inform others (Méndez, 2013) about the need for specific policies towards the integration of these women. DMT could be a good way to help alleviate stress and loneliness, and to improve general quality of life (Bräuninger, 2012b). It could provide a space where the women can freely express themselves in an embodied way. They could forge a sense of community with other women in similar situations, in a space where they can talk about their common problems.

It is difficult to find people from this population for DMT interventions; there is a need for proactive campaigns in order to get to women of this background; to persuade them to take

part in sessions. Mental health is an important component in the integration of migrants into the new society that they live in.

It is important to focus on the general attitudes Muslims have towards the two components of DMT: therapy and dance, as mentioned in the literature review above.

3.5 Research

3.5.1 Primary Research

This was practise diary that I kept of the DMT sessions and a journal of insights, questions, ideas and memories during the writing of this dissertation. This draws on and expands on passages that I wrote in the practise diary. It also draws on personal situations that I have remembered as a result of some of those passages in the practise diary. I have included the diary in Annex 2. The name of the women's association and all the participants has been changed.

3.5.2 Secondary research

I have undertaken a revision of any relevant literature on this subject. I have not found much that is specific to the question of DMT interventions specifically with women from Pakistan. I found some literature of DMT and dance interventions with South Asian women as a whole. Many other interesting articles which have made me think of different approaches to the question. I searched on-line virtual libraries where I could get access to journals, the UAB virtual library, Google Scholar, Science Direct, The Arts in Psychotherapy, and Researchgate. The keywords were: Dance Movement Therapy and Muslim women, Pakistani Women, Migrant women from Pakistan, Muslims and Dance, Muslims and Counselling, Muslims and Therapy, Cross Cultural counselling.

3.5.3 Third phase. I tied the literature in with my own lived experiences. I went back to my mother's experiences and the experiences of women like her. I looked at the themes that arose. I analysed and presented them in the findings chapter.

I am aware of the limitations of the data collection. My sample size is small as only a few of the women from the association's Spanish language class chose to take part in my DMT sessions. I had hoped to have a good balance between women of Muslim or Sikh religion, or women from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, as represented in the Spanish classes. The drop out and absenteeism rate was another factor that limited the sample size. At the beginning the group size was between eight to ten women, in a semi-open DMT group. This stabilised at a core group of six with sporadic attendance of the other women.

3.6 Ethics

I have not asked for informed consent from the women who took part in my DMT sessions. The women remain anonymous. None of their personal data is revealed here and I have changed their names in my practise diary. I do not reveal the real name or the location of the association and the district council that organises the free Spanish classes will not be named. The data I use is from my personal writings and observations. Most of the memories I will recount are from interactions between my mother and I or from observations that I have personally made over the years. My mother died during my first year on the Master's course in January 2016. If any of my siblings are in any of the situations with my mother, they will be mentioned only in passing and will not be named.

I have informed my brother that I may recount some of the difficulties that my sister-in-law experienced in their relationship. They got a divorce in 2002 and are no longer in touch.

4.0 Findings

DANCE enables you to FIND yourself and LOSE yourself at the same time
Peter Townsend

Introduction

I started this study with questions that I had been mulling over since starting the Master's degree; my relationship with dance, my mother's relationship with dance and all forms of enjoyment, and how this affected our relationship with each other. I wanted to explain why dance was such a taboo by investigating the Islamic thought on this topic and how this affected the people coming from that region I wanted to present the current religious climate in Pakistan as a way to understand why more women from this background do not join dance classes or Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) sessions. I was more interested in the women as the part of the population more seriously affected by the Islamic laws.

When I had the chance to offer DMT to women from this background through the Master's work placement; I was intrigued as to how I would put DMT into practise with women of the same background as my mother. I wanted to see if and how dance prohibition limited these women in expressing themselves. If we started off with women who are conditioned to not dance, to not express their wishes, to keep their bodies hidden, how would we get them into DMT sessions? Could DMT be a way to empower these women to feel some control over their own lives? Was there a way to adapt DMT sessions or name them in such a way as to attract these women to the sessions? I was also curious to see the difference between the different age groups from the same country and women in the same situation, but from neighbouring India behaved.

My mother came to the UK on a spousal visa in the same way these women had. She didn't speak the language nor did she have neither family members nor friends in the new country. I was brought up with dance prohibition through my mother and I knew how difficult it had been for me to break out of religious straitjacket that had been imposed on me in this regard.

I wanted to investigate the idea of the "wounded healer", to see if my position of being able to see the situation from the inside, being a cultural insider, was helpful or a hindrance; if I was able to deal with the countertransference I felt. The methodology of autoethnography seemed ideal to me as it would allow me to delve deeper into my mother's and my own stories in the contextualisation of the events that I observed in the DMT sessions. It could help me work through my own wounds in the hope of being able to help others in similar situations.

DMT Masters Weekend January 2015: I received a call during the break from my younger sister in Manchester, that my mother was gravely ill in Pakistan and that this was probably the end. She was eighty-four years old by then and she had been ill for a few years already. I decided to call the family in Pakistan during the lunch hour and went to the next class. I was in the experiential class, Introduction to Dance Movement Therapy as part of the DMT Master's course at the UAB. We were in the movement warm-up but my mind was still on the call from earlier. I couldn't be present in the session when my mind was elsewhere. I gave in to the temptation to check my phone for messages and I saw the WhatsApp message: "Mum just died". There were a few missed calls from her UK phone also. It had all happened about twenty minutes ago.

I don't know if I showed any expression on my face. I am sure M.E. would have already thought it strange that I should go and look at my phone in the middle of the warm-up. I slowly walked out of the room, trying not to create any disturbance to the group dynamic and sat on the waiting chairs outside. I didn't cry. I started to go through practical things in my mind. She had died of old age at the ripe age of eighty-four. We had expected her to die at some point. In fact, every time she went back to Pakistan to visit, she would say this was her last time travelling there. It was her most fervent wish to die there and not have her body repatriated. She was lucky she got her wish. The problem was, this meant that those of us who were not in a position to catch the next flight out would not get to be at the funeral.

After about ten minutes M.E. came out and I explained what had happened. She told me to take my time and I could go back in and tell the group what was going on, but only if that was what I wanted. My first reaction was to say nothing, get my things and go home to be by myself. After all, I have spent most of my life relying only on myself; I could get

through it alone. Luckily M.E.'s soothing way and the confidence she inspired in me made me rethink this. My pre DMT study self would have swallowed the pain and got on with the day to think and feel at a later stage. We were five months into the course, I had learnt a little about being part of a group and relying on it to some extent. There were a couple of people in the group who were outsiders like me and I felt some personal connection with them. I realised that I did want to go back in to the class and tell my class-mates what had happened.

I composed myself and went back into the classroom. I was planning to wait until the checkout and just let everyone know why I had left the room. They were in the circle and I felt in a safe space where I didn't just explain the events, I allowed myself to feel and the tears streamed down my face. In hindsight I imagine those teambuilding exercises where one person closes their eyes and falls backwards knowing that the rest of the group will catch them. This was the psychological space I was in. I have been the eternal older sister or the person in charge – in the family, in my relationships, whether romantic or with friends, in my jobs, in my dance school; I don't remember being in a group situation of equals where we can all support each other. I let go, I let myself feel as the words poured out as did the tears. It was allowed, I was in a safe space.

Experiential Diary of MA DMT sessions January 2015

The vignette above is paraphrased from a passage that I wrote in my personal journal of the experiential DMT classes. It is not only to situate my mother in my experience as a dance movement therapist in training but also to situate my own personal process and growth throughout the Master's course. It is important for me as I re-write and feel the emotions again from that day, to realise that it was a key moment in my training. I had sat through sessions where the other members had easily recounted feelings and cried; at least from my point of view it was "easily". I had learnt to get on with life and had never really had a group where I could also be weak. This moment in the Master's course situated me as a member of the group who could also "feel". I could be more "European" and less "Immigrant" or "Pakistani". I put these terms in commas because it reminds me of moments growing up where my mother, or someone else, in my environment, would say "these Europeans etc versus us Pakistanis or Immigrants etc". As if we were superior for just "getting on with it" and not asking for emotional help or psychotherapy. I think superiority was not what they really felt; it was more like the knowledge

that they were in a foreign country and had to make things work without asking or expecting help from the host country.

4.1 Situating myself in the autoethnography

When I moved to Spain and chose the path of not adhering to family pressure to be a dutiful wife, I also placed myself in a similar journey of being in a new country with no family or friends. I learnt to speak the new language and eventually made lots of friends but I also learnt to not rely on anyone and to always fend for myself. It took me until this moment through the good fortune of being in the experiential DMT class to let go and be vulnerable around others.

Looking back at this moment also helps me understand someone of my mother's background, who was born and brought up in Pakistan, who was brought up to not question their circumstances but to accept them and go on with their lives. I hoped I could shed some light on the behaviour of women like my mother by writing about my struggle, as someone of that culture who still had problems expressing and sharing personal problems in a therapeutic despite being born in England.

The practise diary that I kept of the DMT sessions I offered to the women's association at Espai Zarina, as part of my Master's work placement became the primary source of my research. I changed the names of the participants, the name of the association and created a pseudonym for the district that promoted the immigrant's integration plan. This became the starting point for the literature review which explained the background of the region the women came from. The current political and religious climate of Pakistan was important for situating dance prohibition, drawing a parallel to my mother's ideals and how these affected me through my childhood.

I also investigated the literature around migrants to Europe; especially how migration affected mental health. This lead me to the specifics of Muslims seeking help for mental

problems before specifically researching Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) applied to some of the psychopathologies that came up in the literature around migrants to Europe.

4.2 The DMT Sessions

The DMT sessions were taken up by eleven women, of ages between 18 and 34 years. There were three Muslims from Punjab in Pakistan, there was one Hindu and one Muslim from Bangladesh and six women were Sikhs from the Indian Punjab.

When I started the DMT sessions with the women's association, an incident from the first session, after the initial warm-up in a circle I asked the participants to take turns in proposing a movement:

Today because it is their first day, some of them are kind of shy. One of them, Sonia, laughs when I ask her to take her turn and says, "I never danced I don't know what to do!" I told her it does not matter just feel the music. Think about it. Does this music make you want to move your feet, move your hands. What does this music say to you?

She did not really know what I was trying to do or trying to say but she remember a movement from what I did in the warm up and just copied that. That is OK at least she is moving. And I had a thought afterwards, Sonia is from Pakistan. In Pakistan, due to lot of the Islamization happening in the last 20 years the performing arts do not get much support. In schools and in most settings people are not encouraged to dance or listen to music.

When I was a child going to Pakistani weddings there was a lot of dancing and merriment but this is like well over 30 years ago and the Pakistan of today does not have that much freedom. Then maybe things have changed but Sonia being 32 years old would have probably would have been growing up doing that time when the country was going under the strict military dictatorship. I think it's important to know these things. This is probably the first time that Sonia has been asked to move to music and she will be a good subject to watch. At the moment her profile is not really relaxed or flowing. She is very contained in her movements. I feel that her breathing is not very regular either and she is very aware of people watching her but at the same time that shy smile, she seems to be enjoying herself. I think there is a lot of work we could do with Sonia.

Passage from my practise diary Day 1

Sonia's behaviour was in stark contrast to the other participants of the session. The Sikh ladies from Indian Punjab were giggling and dancing and pushing each other. We had a warm-up

in a circle, for the first song they followed my lead and later I gave the lead to each of the participants. Although they were shy at first, all of them, including the two young Pakistani girls, had made an attempt at leading the circle. When it was Sonia's turn, she froze. I realised what had happened as soon as she said that she had never danced in her life. She became a person of special interest for me because I knew that she was from the modern day post-Islamisation Pakistan. Maybe observing Sonia would help me answer the question of how to have DMT sessions with people of my mother's background; women who have been brought up without the freedom to express themselves through dance.

It shouldn't have surprised me that Sonia stood frozen, just staring at the other women dancing in one of the sessions. She looked at me with mixture of panic and worry on her face. She told me she had never danced to music in her life and didn't even know how to start moving.

It was sad to see this. I understood what and why she was saying this. The contrast between the Sikh Punjabis who were happily dancing to the traditional Punjabi songs, songs that were from my mother's time and this 35 year old Muslim lady still shocked me. Maybe because I thought, no matter what, most women would secretly dance in the house, like I did as a child, in spite of being told not to. It was difficult to think that there are women who have really never tried or even thought of moving to music.

As I found in my literature review, there has been a systematic curtailment of women's rights as well as the prohibition of dance performances. This has meant that women in some rural parts of Pakistan have grown up thinking of dance as a taboo and sinful act.

The contrast with the Indian Punjabi women was apparent. I know that dance is an important part of culture in Punjab having attended a wedding in the Pakistani Punjab in 1978. I know that this wedding dance culture is still alive on the other side of the border. Most weddings

have a combination of men's bhangra and women's gidda (traditional folkloric dances of the Punjab region) during the festivities. In fact, Indian Punjabi schools have inter-school and inter-college Bhangra dance competitions. I expected it to be easier for them to move to music and this was the case, once they got over their initial shyness.

Sonia saying that she has never danced in her life and that she doesn't know how to dance made me think of all these different scenarios. I have my own lived experience of dance prohibition due to my religion. When I go back home and write up my notes on this session, all these different thoughts are in my mind.

Dance has become a contentious subject in Muslim and Pakistani culture. The literal translations of culture and the consequent rise in fundamentalist Islam due to Salafistas (Saudi Wahabbi way of interpreting Islam), Talibans (Muslim scholars who preached fundamentalist Islam in Pakistan's neighbour Afghanistan), and now ISIS (the Islamist State Terrorist group) in the region has made it difficult for moderate people. People in poorer villages of Pakistan do not dare to voice any opposition to these fundamentalist beliefs. I remember watching TV reports of the Taliban (the predecessors to ISIS in the region) burning music cassettes and videos in Afghanistan during the 1990s. Pakistan is not as extreme but there is no denying the influence of the more fundamental currents imported from other countries of the region.

Most of my knowledge of Pakistani and by default Muslim women's attitudes to different spheres of life comes from my mother. I am number six of nine children, all females except for my one brother who was born after me. My mother didn't want to be tainted as "the one who can only produce daughters" Her mother-in-laws taunts haunted her. After losing her first son (who would have been my older brother) to pneumonia at the age of three, she had felt like a woman cursed to only have female children. Upon re-joining my father when she came to England, they

had four more children. I was the first born, then, thank God they had the SON, two more daughters later they stopped. I use this example to show that traditional families place a lot of importance on the male heir. They are willing to keep trying until they eventually have a boy child.

Charsley (2005, 2007) writes extensively about marriages, gender roles and difficulties in adjustment for partners in transnational marriages in the Pakistani community in the UK. In many parts of South Asia female children are seen as a burden, especially in the rural areas. Daughters are a burden to parents as they are always thought of as *beghane ghar ki*, “those of the other’s house”. The parents responsibility to their daughters is to bring them up well to become good wives when they are married off to become part of the “other’s house”. Some interpret this as keeping their daughters chaste and safely under wraps so that they arrive pristine virgin bride to their new house whilst some higher class families may think that a well-educated girl will find a better husband, like a civil servant or an emigrant for example.

In the rural communities where people are poorer, fewer resources are allocated to the girl child’s education. They are educated to the bare minimum and more emphasis is placed on religion and chastity (Farooq & Deen, 2016, Redman, 2017). My mother was from a rural background so she thought it was better for us to have a strong religious upbringing and rein in any fanciful ideas. She would say that a woman needed to be able to give religious instruction to her children and have a good command of mathematics for household accounting. As God had given her the burden of eight daughters, she would rise to the occasion and produce a line of good future wives.

I imagine Sonia to be from this same background of women who are expected to be good Muslim women, get married and produce children. In the warm-up, when Sonia started moving

to the music I noticed that she tried to catch my eye as if looking for approval that she was doing it “properly” and I smiled my encouragement and felt relief that she was trying. It had been enough for me that she had returned to a second session. I realised that she was the closest example to what my mother could have been like when she arrived in Manchester.

Now they are dancing Gidda, the traditional dance that Punjabi women do, clapping their hands in a circle and twisting and turning. It’s a dance where every so often a pair of women go into the circle and dance with each other together in a sort of challenging way. Then one goes out of the circle and other one comes in or the pair both go out of the circle and another pair comes in and the people around the edge of the circle just keep clapping in time to the music. This kind of dynamic to a lesser extent was happening in front of me, it was good to watch. It made me feel really happy and really relaxed and it took me back to a time of seeing these kinds of dances more than 30 years ago. I think today the session was very interesting from that point of view. I really do feel a bit sad for Sonia, considering that she had not been able to express herself in body movement at all. It is something that has not been made available to her because of where she was born and how she was brought up. I find that quite sad. I do not know how to explain it but I think it is something. These women are from the same place my parents came from I see maybe some reflection of people that I know in my own family. It’s curious; it isn’t the same detachment that I can feel in sessions with people from other backgrounds. It’s something I am going to need to think about and investigate a little bit more about my own transference and counter-transference I am feeling in these sessions.

Passage from my Practise Diary Day 2

When I observed Sonia in the Spanish classes before starting the practical part of the work placement, her look of bewilderment when she didn’t understand the words, her stressed face as she arrived, running in late with the baby in the stroller, her not so warm traditional clothes when it was raining and cold, all this struck a chord in me. I compared her to the Indian Punjabi ladies, always giggling at some joke and how they wore jeans or thick leggings over long jumpers with boots or sports shoes when it was cold.

In traditional Muslim families women are expected to dress in a traditional way as they are perceived as the guardians of the family honour (Faulkner, 2006). This can be at odds with the weather conditions in the new country. My mother used to have her traditional clothes made

of thicker, warmer materials for the winter and would wear thick socks with shoes. I have marvelled at women wearing cotton, traditional Punjabi clothes with open-toe sandals in the rain, in England and in Spain. Their only recognition of the weather is a cardigan over the cotton clothes and an umbrella if it is raining.

Sonia didn't come back for the next few sessions. I was told by the rest of the women that she had not been in Spanish class because her baby had a cold. A few weeks later, even though she had returned to the Spanish class, she didn't make an appearance at our DMT sessions. I imagined she thought of our sessions as being frivolous or a waste of time, or maybe at odds with her religion. I felt disappointed.

It is telling that Sonia, the Pakistani lady with the child has not come back. I had looked forward to getting her to loosen up and find her dance moves. Maybe she has lost the impetus to come because of not being able to come when her son was ill. I have not heard anything from her again and none of the other women can actually tell me much. They say yes, they have seen her in the Spanish classes and that she says she does not have much time or that she is not feeling well and she is not going to come to the DMT sessions. I don't press because it is a voluntary session and if somebody does not want to come I cannot send messages to make them come. It's a shame because the two sessions she was with us, I saw that there really was some opening up on her side and feel that she could have gained a lot from coming to these sessions.

... I am feeling from the last few sessions that the ones who are coming and taking part are the ones that have the certain "joie de vivre" that enjoy moving and probably a lot more open. It would have been nice to have gotten the ones who are a bit closed and a little less used to moving their body and who are probably in a more restrictive relationship or come from a more restrictive culture. But again I am doing practice and need to do what I can with the people that are coming.

Passages from my Practise Diary Day 5

As a DM therapist in training in this moment I have to realise that the hard part is recognising when you can't do much more. My previous year's practise was at a residential and day centre for adults with intellectual incapacity and the sessions were offered to people who spent the whole day at the occupational centre. There was very little absenteeism and I had been able to see the users of the centre in almost all the

sessions. This was a contrast to this working with women who have other things happening in their lives and sometimes coming to a therapy session does not take priority over other life events.

We arrive and today I have a surprise Sonia, who has not been with us for at least the last 10 sessions, she only came to the first 2 sessions, the Pakistani lady with the little boy in the stroller, she has come....

She says that she had been very busy. One of her children was ill then another child was ill, then she had so many things to do and that they had family come from Pakistan and they stayed at her house. Obviously she could not leave the people and come out to the dance therapy sessions. I think it was probably very difficult for her to explain what she is doing in our sessions and as in traditional Muslim and Pakistani family they frown on people dancing and doing these kinds of activities. It's good to see her again. We welcome her and every one is saying it's nice to see her again. She had been coming to the Spanish classes. So the women had seen her in the Spanish classes. Just she had not been in the (DMT sessions)

Passage from my Practise Diary Day 14

Much to my frustration this is this is the last time we see Sonia in the sessions. She didn't really participate and spent most of the session sitting and observing without taking part. We had a total of 26 sessions, therefore when Sonia came back I thought I would still have enough time to do some DMT work with her. When she didn't return, I understood from observing her in session 14 that she didn't feel part of the group. They had been together many weeks and knew how to move together. They had their in-jokes and warm-up rituals. It felt like Sonia had come to see if she was really missing anything worth going against her principles and had decided not to bother to come again. I was disappointed and had to remind myself that absenteeism and abandonment of a voluntary process can happen and often does happen. Vahabi & Damba (2015) had also had this in the pilot study for gender specific dance interventions in Canada, not everyone takes up or completes the number of sessions. But I still couldn't help feeling like I had

failed Sonia and I was left thinking if I could have had one to one DMT sessions with her and if that might have been different.

4.3 DMT and Mental Health

I found that some of the factors that contribute to a deterioration in mental health in migrants are the sense of isolation due to leaving their families behind, the lack of integration in the new country which can be due to language and other intercultural conflicts and the loss of social ties, which could be the leaving behind networks of close friends (Oncina et al, 2008).

DMT group sessions offer the migrant woman a safe space to express herself. Studies on Quality of Life improvement or alleviation of stress factors that can lead to depression (Bräuninger, 2012a, 2012b) have shown that DMT sessions can have a positive effect on mental health.

Today when it was time for me to leave home for me to go the session it was raining very heavily. I was looking at my whatsapp to see if I got any messages saying where they would come or not come to the session and the fact that they usually take the children to school at 3pm some of them might have gone home and not bothered to come today. So I arrived at the centre and was pleasantly surprised that two of the women were waiting for me. There was Sita and Happy. They were there already. They said “Even if it rains we are here. This is like so much fun; we do not want to miss these sessions.”

Happy said today her husband was at home and he asked her to stay at home with him, she seemed very pleased to be able to say to him that she had something else planned already and that he could stay at home for a few hours by himself, she was going to leave to come to her session. It was funny because she seemed very proud to have something to do instead of waiting at home for her husband to have a day off to decide to do something with her.

Passage from my Practise Diary Day 3

In this example I learn that apart from the DMT aspect of the sessions, I was also providing a special space for the women to come to. It had become something they enjoyed coming to and a space that they could call their own. It meant that they were not sitting at home, relying on the

husband for leisure activities on his day off. The DMT group creates a social environment for the women to interact.

The same woman in the check in of our next session:

I ask them how they are, what is happening since the last time we saw each other which was on Monday. It's funny because Happy said she had a lot of cooking to do this evening but she left out the onions and garlic and gave her older son instructions on how to cut it all up and get it ready before she came home. This seems to amuse her a lot because usually she would be at home preparing all of the food and this time she basically delegated it to her son and it seems like she had taken a bold move.

Passage from my Practise Diary Day 4

This DMT session I saw that as well as giving a safe space for expression it can also be empowering for the women. There were more examples of the women giving more responsibilities to husbands or children in the home while they came to the DMT sessions. Pree started to leave her daughter at home with the husband on his day off instead of bringing her to the sessions. In one session the twins Zoya and Zara said that one of them was feeling bored and a little depressed at home on the weekend but she cheered up when she remembered that we had a session on Monday. I realised that we had created a special group for them to move together and create a sense of community.

Zara and Zoya, the younger ones, take the veils and make like a makeshift sari where they wrap it around their bodies and put one end over their shoulder like the Indians do. I know that makes them laugh and feel like they are in a fantasy world because Pakistani families don't wear saris. They think of it as a Hindu thing and they would have seen this kind of thing in Indian movies so for them they are getting into a fantasy world and playing with the veils in this way. When the Punjabi music comes on, the traditional music again the circle is formed and they start clapping and doing the traditional dance moves and when the funny song comes on about the man and the woman Sita again wraps the veil around her head (like a turban) and starts chasing one of the girls and they start laughing and playing and again its quite fun. Sita is older she is married she's 27 even though she seems older but her playful side comes out when she enacts these funny games in the villages when the girls pretend to be boys and I think it's quite fun for Zara and Zoya who are usually the ones who are playing and flirting again coming from a restrictive culture they would not have had boyfriends. As a suitor will be found for them and they will be married off when they are old enough. So this kind of game playing when they are flirting with a man or boy and in this song where it's all about a young

women who is in love with him. It is good because I understand what is going on, I also come from a family where I have lived with these cultural nuances.

Passage from my Practise Diary Day 5

Symbolism and play is a very important part of DMT sessions (Schmais, 1985) and I was pleased to see the women use their imaginations and indulge in playground games of typical wedding enactments. The games that I have seen at wedding henna parties where the bride's friends laugh at the bridegroom and show how he will chase the bride on their wedding night. In the DMT sessions they can play dress up and have fun as if they are children with no responsibilities. The group was getting comfortable with each other towards cohesion.

5.0 Conclusion

To DANCE is to LIVE
Isadora Duncan

In this thesis, I wanted to highlight the need for DMT interventions with women of South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular. Pakistan was of special interest for me due to my own background. Pakistan is a country with defined Islamic laws and ideals and this would also help contextualise women from other Muslim majority countries.

My sources of information were the memories of my mother and my own family interactions; the literature I found around the subject and my personal experience in the DMT sessions during the Master's work placement. The thesis is of personal nature and this was the reason that I decided to use an autoethnographic methodology. I thought that my background helped me understand the women in my DMT sessions, not only because of the common languages we shared but also our intrinsic shared cultural values.

The South Asian women who took part in the DMT sessions I offered were Sikhs from India, and Muslims from Pakistan and Bangladesh. I was able to compare the differences and similarities between the women during the sessions. I saw the development of a sense of community as they shared experiences during check-in. I was able to provide a DMT setting as a safe space for some of the women to talk about their relationships, the dynamics with their husbands and sexual relationships, even though the last was sometimes referred to as innuendo and joking around. This joking around also continued into the dance and symbolic play that eventually happened through the process. It was useful that I understood Punjabi because all of the innuendo and joking around was the spontaneous conversation between the women during check-in in their mother tongue, Punjabi. These moments would have been lost in translation

(Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002; Rasool, 2015). Even though it is possible to have live interpreters in therapy I personally feel that the innuendo and in-jokes would still be lost in translation if at all translatable.

The question as to whether women like my mother would even come to DMT sessions had, from my placement experience, a disappointing answer. The take-up for the sessions from Muslim Pakistani women was low – 3 out of 5 women from observation; the absenteeism and eventual abandonment of the sessions meant that during the last month I had no Muslim women in the sessions. Although this was not due to only religious resistance, I was not able to have enough interactions with women of my mother's background in a DMT setting.

My cultural similarities to the women of the DMT sessions brought up memories of my mother and my own lived situations. Initially this emotion might have been seen as a hindrance to objectivity but I feel it was useful to have a cultural and linguistic understanding of the women. I watched out for and took care to encourage one of the women who had never danced in her life due to her strict religious upbringing. She was the one who brought up many memories of my mother's attitude to dance and the fact that I had been prohibited from taking dance lessons. My closeness to the subject made me more aware and more empathetic to her as a member of the same cultural group as myself. I was very disappointed though that she only came to four of the twenty-four sessions and I was not able to do more work with her.

The two younger Pakistani girls who came to most of the sessions made me feel hopeful that things might change for the future generations of Pakistani women. They seemed more confident and open to learn and participate in new experiences. They integrated well into the group and learned movements from the older women. They were playful, fun-loving and joyful.

Globalisation and information technology advancements with smart phones that give easy access

to music and dance videos are also helpful in exposing the younger generations to the outside world. In this case the positive would be that the young girls had watched many dance videos and were happy to be in an environment where they were encouraged to move with the older women of the group. I observed how one of the younger girls would try out different movements that she had observed in the warm-up of the sessions or how she would join in with the other women interpreting some of their movements.

The DMT sessions became a meeting place for the women to relax and joke around in (Subramaniam in Dokter, 1998). It gave them a place where they were not administering to the needs of their husbands or other family members. They were not here to sit and learn as in a formal Spanish class. These sessions were for them to make what they wanted of them. The example of the Indian lady who told us that her husband had the day off one of the days of our sessions; she proudly announced to us that she had left him at home because she had somewhere to be. She was pleased to have a space that she enjoyed coming to and that she wasn't dependent on her husband for all her entertainment. Another example was of the lady who stopped bringing her toddler to the sessions on Wednesdays because the husband had offered to take care of the child on his day off. This meant that she could take part in the sessions without having to be constantly aware of taking care of the child. It also meant that the husband was collaborating with his wife and spending quality time with his daughter on his day off.

As the DMT sessions progressed the women became more comfortable with each other and the discussions became more intimate. I felt that this informal meeting space where they could just be themselves served as a catalyst for closer relationships between the women who came regularly to the sessions.

My personal journey as a DMT student has helped me to relive childhood memories and revisit my relationship with dance. There was a transference/countertransference for me during the DMT sessions working with women who closely resembled my mother's situation. Working through these feelings, as I participated in the DMT sessions as a therapist, has helped me understand my mother more and in the process had helped me feel "healed" as I worked with the similar women. As in the concept of the "wounded healer" (Martin, 2011), I used my personal experience of prohibition and a restrictive Muslim upbringing in an empathic way to better understand the women of the DMT group. Hearing their stories, moving with them and being with them has made me feel more healed.

The thesis has helped me get up-to-date on current research in mental health in general with women from South Asia. It has highlighted a need to find more volunteers from recent migrant women, especially Muslim women, for more research with dance and DMT interventions.

The investigation into Muslim attitudes to dance and the current situation in some Muslim countries has reinforced my initial idea that DMT is necessary with this population. Giving women from this population a therapeutic space where they can use bodily expression becomes even a greater necessity. Letting them feel that dance is a natural expression of joy almost becomes a necessity.

Limitations of the study

The size of the sample of volunteers for the DMT sessions and my own inexperience as a student on a practical work placement were two of the limiting factors of this study. The lack of specific information of DMT with Muslim women means that this could be a good area for future studies and research. How to get more volunteers for DMT sessions and how to make the

therapeutic objective more important and more attractive for future volunteers would be some of the starting points for further study. The large influx of refugees from war-torn Muslim majority countries means that we have a large population of Muslim women who are now in Europe. A lot of them are in refugee camps in different countries. They could benefit from DMT interventions as part of the therapy they will require to deal with trauma and to aid their integration into the new country. In this context any previous studies relating to the Muslim world, women and dance could be very helpful.

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Annex 1 - My Stories

I was born in Manchester, UK to a recent immigrant mother from Pakistan of the sixties. She became one of the “left behind wives” when my father left Pakistan to find his fortune in England. The post-war shortage of unskilled labourers meant that people from the ex-colonies were “invited” to come and work. My father came to Europe legally with a Visa stamp to work in a factory in Manchester as opposed to today’s economic migrants who have to go through many hardships as they try to cross borders illegally. He arrived in the England of the swinging sixties, got a job straight away and an English girlfriend. Life was good.

My mother, on the other hand, had to endure a lot of hardship. She was left to the mercy of a mother-in-law who cursed her for having had five daughters before the only son. She would sometimes refer to them as cockroaches and how they were eating up all her food. Things became extremely difficult for my mother when her only son died of pneumonia at the age of three. My father had discovered an amazing world of partying and freedom to hang out with the opposite sex in sixties England. My father was having a good time and had forgotten about his family in Pakistan.

Money wasn’t arriving from my father and my mother couldn’t expose her daughter’s to her mother-in-law’s venom anymore. She moved back into her widowed mother’s house as they decided what would be the next step. Four of my mother’s brothers clubbed together and put money together for a one way plane ticket; they organized the spousal visa papers and dispatched my mother off thousands of miles away to get back with her husband and make it work. Two of the older daughters (fourteen and fifteen years old) had hastily arranged marriages and the other three eight, nine and eleven years old stayed with my grandmother to wait for the family papers to arrive.

Even years after, even though I write this brief background to my mother's arrival in England, even though it seems I am just stating the facts, I have to stop after every paragraph and feel the pressure in my head and make myself breathe to let go of the stress and sadness that envelopes me. Growing up we didn't know any of this story. We just knew that my mother's papers were sent first and then my sisters arrived in England a year after I was born.

When we were children, even though I never remember feeling unloved, as our essential needs were always taken care of. We realised that my mother was the stricter parent. She was the religious one and not as emotionally demonstrative as my father. We turned to my father for comfort and hugs and lapped up his stories on his days off on Sundays. He would tell us stories of when he was a soldier in the British army during the Second World War. We were fascinated that he could count to ten in Japanese later my mother told us that he had been a prisoner of war in Singapore. His outlook on life was more improvisational. He went with the flow and didn't think of the future or saving money.

We knew that my father would grant us permission for all sorts of things that my mother wouldn't ever let us do. We grew up thinking my father was an amazing fun guy and that my mother was a bit of a witch. It is sad to remember that now after so many years.

It was only much later, once we were older and had heard some of our mother's survival stories, sometimes through my older sisters' childhood memories of the time they spent with my maternal grandmother before coming to England; and sometimes from my mother's reminiscences why she had to be the way she was. We realised that she had to be strict and organised. She had to be the mean parent and give us boundaries. She is the reason why we had

savings and that bills were paid on time. She had to be the stronger. More responsible parent in contrast to the fun-loving, happy-go-lucky man who was my father.

My studies on the Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) course at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) became inextricably linked to my mother. In the beginning it was the discovery of the different applications of dance in a therapeutic setting. Upon learning of the different populations where DMT interventions were possible I started to wonder what it would have been like if people like my mother had had the opportunity to partake in DMT sessions. I wondered how it might have helped my mother to understand that dance can be joyful. If this might have made her more understanding of my desire to join dance classes. If life might have been different...

For my mother classical Indian dance was either something that Hindus did in their temples or the modern Indian dance was the kind that women with loose morals performed in the Indian movies.

My earliest memory of my relationship with dance comes from an anecdote that my mother loved telling people. Four year old me, in front of the television, dancing to some music, it may have been a TV ad or some children's program with songs. That in itself is quite normal. I have seen my nieces and nephews bop along to music from the moment they can sit. The punch line of this story is that my younger brother, who couldn't have been quite three years old, shouts at me to stop dancing because Muslim girls are not supposed to do that!

Looking back, I sense the pride my mother felt when she told this story. It is pride that her son, at such a tender age "knew" "right" from "wrong". Pride that he already took it on himself to do the male policing of women's rights. It certainly wasn't pride in my dancing in front of the television. If I think of that episode at a deeper level, it is obvious to me that my brother's outburst didn't come out of nowhere. He didn't wake up one morning with the knowledge that "good Muslim" girls don't gyrate to music. This was a learned behaviour. He must have heard my mother say this to me before and had just repeated it parrot like. I don't think that he knew about his Muslim male privilege at this age.

Fast forward to 1985 and we are on a summer holiday in Pakistan. We are in our Punjabi village house. My two older sisters, who lived permanently in Pakistan, are here. My

niece who is three years older than me has recently been married. Her mother-in-law and the mother-in-law's mother *Daadi*² Saidan, are also here. My mother has just left to go shopping with her only sister. There is an expectant air of excitement.

"Come quick before your mother gets back!" This is *Daadi* Saidan. My niece, Nusrat, comes in from the outer courtyard and gives us the news that she has just seen my mother and aunt get into the *tonga* (trap and horse) to go into town. "Show! Show!" they chant in unison.

My brother and I had been rehearsing our number and we emerge from the small room at the other side of the inner courtyard, pausing for dramatic effect. We wait for the clapping to start properly and then I signal for my niece to press play on the radio/cassette player.

The song starts: *Yeh ladki hai ya shola*³ from the 1981 hit movie *Sholay*. We are immediately in our roles as the hit pair of Amitabh Bachchan and Rekha. We have seen the song so many times and we have practised it down to the last detail. At this moment for our all female audience we *are* the hit pair putting on a great show. They know all the dance moves from watching it on television, and are waiting for the last part of the song where the hero throws the veil around the woman and pulls her in as he claims the upper hand in the word play of the song.

They are delighted and clap hard, cheering. They relive the song and dance number that they had seen on the black and white television. They relive it in glorious Technicolor and in live, 3D, at the hands of these audacious *vileitis* (English born). *Daadi* Saidan, who must be at least sixty-five if not seventy years old, a bony, weathered old woman, gets up and starts clapping and stamping her feet in delight. My brother throws the veil he had around his neck over her and she playfully moves it around in her hands like the heroines in the movies.

All the females are clapping, with tears streaming down their faces at the ridiculous spectacle of the old lady and my fifteen year old brother dancing together.

These two vignettes are eleven years apart; the former where my brother is emulating his mother, telling me not to dance and the latter where he is happily participating in the dancing. In the end we inherited our father's love of music and movie watching. It was apparent to us that my mother was the killjoy. The whole family was afraid of her bad opinion of them. They all enjoy the entertainment but usually after my mother was out of the way.

² *Daadi* means paternal grandmother, but is also used for very old females on the father's side of the family

³ Translation: Is this a woman or a ball of fire?

In hindsight, it is a shame that she doesn't get to participate or witness these moments of joy; the joy that is the result of our dancing, the joy that is the result of our audacity that frees the other females to join in. *Daadi* Saidan is the only one who got up to dance but the others joined in with their clapping and laughing. They have been conditioned to not dance, to not enjoy the freedom to move their bodies in time to the music. My mother is not the only one who frowns on dancing. The whole of conservative, orthodox Pakistan frowns on these unislamic ways. The hindus dance and we don't!

Daadi Saidan would have been in her late twenties or early thirties at the time of partition and the formation of the new Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1947. She would remember a time when everyone was mixed up; Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs all living side by side in the village. They would have gone to each other's weddings and other festivals. They would have witnessed, even if they didn't partake in, the typical dances that went with those rituals. In fact Punjabi culture, regardless of religion, is rich in the traditional dances and folklore. The wedding rituals include different dances that go with each moment; bhangra for the men, luddi and gidda for the women. Then there are the traditional songs for the weddings, boliyan, songs that take the form of dialogue between two groups who try to outdo each other as they ridicule the families of the bride or the groom.

Even though my mother was very strict and religious, we had been exposed to Indian movies because my older sister's liked to watch them. There was a program μ me on British TV that would sometimes show an Indian or Pakistani movie very late at night. Later on we would hire a VCR player on special occasions and the whole family would sit around the television and watch three or four three-hour movies back to back. As children we didn't pay much attention to

the stories but I remember my brother would focus on the fight scenes while I would absorb all the dance scenes.

Our struggle during childhood was not confined to showing how Muslim we were compared to the Hindus; we were also constantly being reminded that we were Pakistani and not like “these English people”. My mother’s greatest fear was that we would start to behave in a disrespectful way, want to wear short skirts, forget our culture and generally behave like “these English people”.

I am eight years old. Fresh in my first term in the Junior school. I love the challenges of all the new subjects. I love English class, reading poems, learning to recite in a language I understand and love. I love listening to my class teacher, Mr Lucas, when he reads to us, every Friday afternoon, from the “My Naughty Little Sister” books. He transmits his love of reading to us.

I come home still feeling proud. I had recited one of Shakespeare’s sonnets from memory. As I recall this moment now, I stop and wonder if I could find that sonnet now. It had something to do with wind, shaking, and Darling Buds of May. Thank God for “Saint” Google. I put in Shakespeare, Sonnet, Wind, Shaking; these are the only words I can remember now. The search engine brings it up straightaway and I find it!!! I read it and try to imagine my eight year old self saying these words with pomp.

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
 And summer’s lease hath all too short a date.
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
 And every fair from fair sometime declines,
 By chance, or nature’s changing course, untrimmed;
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st,
 Nor shall death brag thou wand’rest in his shade,
 When in eternal lines to Time thou grow’st.
 So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day? (Sonnet 18)

William Shakespeare, 1564 – 1616

Of course I didn't understand any of the nuances but I loved getting my tongue around the words and I loved the drama and flourish of standing up and reciting it. My teacher was impressed at my memory and I had been offered one of the leads in "The Two Travellers". I didn't tell my teacher that I have great recall skills from being able to recite parrot-like passages from The Koran in ancient Arabic.

I don't understand the words that I recite from the Koran but I have known from the age of five that this makes my mother immensely proud. I finished the whole, thick volume that is the Koran for the first time when I was five years old. The Koran recital was in Arabic. We are not Arabs and we don't speak Arabic. Apparently it is holier to read the Koran in the original Arabic even if you don't understand a word that you are saying. I used to find it challenging to pronounce the different sounds, and to try to decipher the lines and dots to form the words in the Arabic text that we read from right to left.

Before I get through the door I check my feeling of pride and say "Assalamalakium" as all good Muslim children are taught to say. Tea is ready and a quick snack later I am off to the bathroom to do my ablutions and get ready to go to Mosque.

I am still thinking about the script in my school bag and I am dying to hide in my room to read it, but first of all "duty calls." My brother and two sisters are also ready and we walk to the Mosque to do our daily parrot-like reading of the Koran.

I find it too easy now so I am able to mull over the script in my school bag even as I peruse the Arabic pages in front of me. I am thankful that rehearsals for the play are during class time. We don't have time for school extra-curricular activities as we go to read Koran every day straight after school. On Saturday mornings we have Urdu language class and some Islamic instruction. This doesn't leave room for after-school sports or drama clubs.

Later in the evening, I tell my older sister about my lead role in the play, The

"Two Travellers", she will be the go between and tell my mother. She decides that there is not really much to tell until just before the Christmas performance. As the rehearsals are during school time, during breaks and lunch-time, I don't need special permission. Also we never tell my mother that the two travellers are on the road to visit baby Jesus and that it is a Christmas play. I don't remember a conversation about whether or not we were going to tell her this. It was something unspoken, as if "what is the point of rocking the boat?" This leaving out of details, to avoid unnecessary upsets must have worked for my sister too.

This is where I learn the concept of "on a need to know basis" as in "if they don't ask, don't tell". My mother would have prohibited my taking part in a play about Jesus on the grounds of us being Muslims. I learn the art of telling the truth to my mother but omitting a detail that will cause unnecessary stress at a very early age.

I feel proud that I have a lead role, I feel proud of my achievement. I feel proud... I let the feeling go into a deep hidden place inside me and put it away. I put it into a virtual treasure chest, where I will put most of my achievements, as I start to recognise over the years that none of this makes my mother proud of me. My mother's measures of success for women were always Good Muslim, Good Wife, Good Producer of Children, Good Manager of a Household.

I learn to be proud of myself, for myself. I put away school stuff and go and help my older sister prepare the family dinner like a "good little Muslim girl".

Getting back to my mother's history, she was born in 1931, in British India; she remembered when most of her none-Muslim teenage friends and neighbours packed up and left for India, and how they were all gone by 1947. 1947, the year the British left India and split the country up into what is now known as Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. She once recounted a story of playing in the village with some of her Sikh friends one day and then they were gone. Pakistan was created as a safe haven for the Muslims post decolonization. She had strange sayings about being Hindu (negative) or being Muslim (positive), which didn't make much sense to us as children. Once she forbade us to tie our hair in high top-knots or buns, saying "Hindus do that!" We found this ridiculous and would do it again, just to hear her say that. Our childhood had many such moments of "Hindus do that!" or "Muslims don't do that!"

With hindsight I suppose this would have been part of her teenage years where post-partition, newly formed Pakistan struggled to form its identity as a Muslim state differentiating itself from its majority Hindu neighbour. It became an insult to say "Hindus do that!" to someone so they would have to correct themselves quickly to show how "Muslim" they really were.

Another thing that Hindus did but Muslims shouldn't do was dance.

My relationship with dance has been precarious in the sense that I was never allowed to take dance classes and had been told many times that "we" don't do "that". Even when I was older and independent it didn't occur to me that I could take dance classes. I loved going out to dance

clubs throughout my university years and danced hours at a time, I still loved moving to music but the desire to learn classical Indian dances or go to any formal training had been killed. If I was to be taken seriously as an educated Muslim woman in society I needed to be a doctor, lawyer, accountant or something similarly impressive, not a dancer. My “independent, emancipated thirty something me” didn’t go back to my first love, Dance, as soon as I could. It had been conditioned out of me.

In 1978 I was brought to Pakistan for the first time. It was just before my tenth birthday. It was my turn to be exhibited to the relatives. I was the first born in my parents’ new land, England. The excuse for my mother’s visit was my first cousin, Seema’s wedding and my mother was our equivalent of her godmother/maid of honour. I was a precocious child, a high achiever, my mother’s pride. This pride was not related to my coming first in almost all my school exams but rather because I had finished reading the Koran, in Arabic by the age of five.

Her other claim to fame, at the age of eight, I had been featured in a local Urdu newspaper for being in a group of youngsters who had recited long passages of the Koran from memory at our Manchester mosque.

My favourite memories from that time are all related to the wedding, especially the henna ceremony where the ladies sat with a *dolki* drum playing the *boliya* beat and singing. Some of the older ladies got up and danced, *Daadi* Saidan was there. My aunt, the bride’s mother, was pulled up. She did a few spins and hip shakes before laughing shyly and sitting back down. My mother didn’t get up and I don’t think anyone was foolish enough to try to pull her up. She was smiling though and seemed happy watching the women painting henna tattoos on the hands and feet of her favourite niece.

I watched, fascinated, because I had been told that we didn’t dance. Good Muslims don’t dance! I knew all these ladies were Muslims. It seemed to be acceptable for them to dance in an all female, private space. I started questioning the whole idea of what my mother had said and my interest in dance was reignited.

Dance for women is not prohibited in India. Girls from middle to upper class families can go to classical Indian dance schools. In the Indian Punjab, the national folkloric dance Bhangra is even included in inter-college competitions. Each school or college has a bhangra team. Women enjoy dancing the female traditional dances; gidda and luddi at the Punjabi festivals. All this

promotes a healthy, rich cultural dance heritage. The Indian film industry, part of which is known as Bollywood to the world, has lots of dance numbers. The actresses are from all walks of life; poor families, upper middle class intellectuals, former beauty queens, models, and a long etcetera. Even girls from poor families have access to the movies and they copy the dance numbers at home, or while playing with friends. There isn't a stigma attached to dancing.

This is not so on the other side of the border, Pakistan's Punjab is Muslim. Men dance bhangra at all celebrations. They dance in segregated parties. They dance while the women stay seated. At some celebrations, weddings mostly, women are brought in to dance. They are professional women who are also prostitutes most of the time. Then we have the other acceptable dancers, the *khusras* or transgender men who dress and live as women. They can be seen at weddings or at births of children.

It wasn't always like this. There used to be Arts Centres in the big cities, some form of chaste dancing was seen on Pakistan Television (PTV), but post 80s, the General Zia dictatorship undertook the Islamization of Pakistan. This was an attempt at differentiating the Pakistani Muslim "us" and the Hindu or any other religion that lived in India "them". Dancing was relegated to suggestive gyrating of the prostitutes or the women in the Pakistani film industry, some of who were ex-prostitutes. It doesn't surprise me that my mother was so set against dance if we consider this backdrop to dance in Pakistan.

It is 2002 and I am living in Barcelona. It's a wonderful life, I can't complain. I have a big apartment in Gracia, a whole lot of friends and a fantastic job as an administrative accountant. I am living the dream; sunshine, beach, skiing, horse riding, press parties, everything that a 30 something can enjoy. So why have I just had a long tearful phone call with my friend, Kiera, in Scotland. I remember this feeling of emptiness and as I tried to explain how I felt to my ex-flatmate between sobs. It was the Eid festival and I was in Spain, far away from my family, in my self-imposed exile. I couldn't live, even in the same country as them but I felt bad and sad on Muslim festival days. I felt isolated but I knew I couldn't sacrifice who I needed to be just to have family festivals.

A few years earlier when Kiera still lived with me, she and some of my other friends had dressed up in typical Pakistani clothes and come to have dinner with me on the feast of the lamb, Eid-ul-Adha festival day. It still makes me smile, that they would do this to cheer me up because I didn't have other culturally similar people to celebrate with.

This vignette is an attempt to explain that those of us who choose a different life path can have paid a high price for not adhering what our traditional Muslim families expect of us.

That same year I suffered from stress and remember finding a bald patch at the back of my head as my hair started to fall out. Living the "dream" didn't stop me from feeling like I wasn't living the life I was supposed to. A few months after that I was walking back from seeing an apartment I was thinking of buying. I stopped in front of business premises to rent. I had a flash of inspiration and thought if the rental on this local is the same as what I would pay for the monthly mortgage on the apartment I was thinking of buying, then I should take it. I would open a dedicated cultural space about Indo/Pak culture and promote the arts and dance of this region. The idea wasn't fully formed yet, but this was the moment that I started down the path to self-employment as a Bollywood and Indian dance teacher. Something I would do every day from 2004. At last I would feel whole and the empty feeling would go away.

It took me until the age of 34 to come to the realisation that I needed to go back to my first love; that the corporate life path that was expected of me as a high achieving Muslim female was not what I wanted. I had spent so much of my life trying to impress my family that I had forgotten to be myself.

There are a lot of expectations in Muslim families. As a woman you get married, have children and run a household. If you choose the academic path and then decide you don't want to get married then you better have an amazing high flying career to show for it. You don't give up everything to JUST DANCE.

The DMT sessions with the women from South Asia and the subsequent thesis writing helped me contextualise some of what they go through. The further research about women migrants and their mental health, their expectations, the social stigma they feel in an unknown country, the isolation they feel and how they have to cope with leaving behind all their family to

come to a strange country; it's not that I didn't know any of this, but studying it in detail has put me into my mother's skin to see the world through her eyes.

I finish writing this and I feel so much lighter. I hadn't realised that the ritual of writing down my story would be so cathartic. This has been the gift that the DMT Master's course has given me. It gave me the chance to relive my story, to feel healed, through exploring the background of my mother's way of thinking and helping me come to terms with some of my past.

ON the following page a poem to finish off my autoethnography...

Dancing Between Two Worlds

<p>Life Living We don't do <i>this</i> <i>Muslims</i> don't do <i>this</i> Muslim <i>girls</i> don't do <i>this</i> <i>Good Muslim girls</i> don't do <i>this</i> Stop doing <i>that</i> Stop it STOP! But... Why? I am obedient I accept I stop I am <i>little</i> I don't <i>understand</i> I don't like her frown I don't like her anger Why is she angry? Who are <i>we</i>? Why can <i>they</i> do it? Us and <i>them</i> Here and <i>there</i> <i>Then</i> and now I accept I carry on I do us when I am here</p>	<p>I do <i>them</i> when I am <i>there</i> Two places Two worlds That was <i>then</i> Now... She is no more I am me I am <i>us</i> and them I am <i>here</i> and there <i>Then</i> has gone Now is me <i>Does she understand?</i> <i>Will she understand?</i> <i>Would she understand?</i> Sense Senses Living Living <i>then</i> Living for <i>now</i> Living for the <i>after-life</i> <i>Who</i> decides? <i>Why</i> decide? Sin or <i>virtue</i>? I danced I want to dance I will dance I am DANCE</p>
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Annex 2 - Espai Zarina 2017 Practise Diary based on my observations during the DMT sessions

We started off with two sessions of 1,5 hours per week. The reason for this was that when I was doing the observation hours, there were two groups, two different levels of Spanish class at the Casal. At the beginning there was a lot of interest in doing the sessions or at least a lot of people signed up. The idea was to have a semi-open group where some people would come once a week choosing the Monday or Wednesday group. Some women expressed an interest in coming to both days. There was also a possibility of having one group of women who came with their toddlers and the other day for the women whose children were all at school.

We established 1.5 hour sessions because the idea was to use the time between 15 – 17h which is the length of the afternoon session at school for their children. They would leave the children, come straight to the session for 15.15 and then they would leave the session at 16.45h in time to pick up the children at 17h. Any other combination for the afternoon sessions would not work as they are all housewives and mothers.

On 3rd May we mutually decided to do only Wednesdays until June 6th, as they were getting busier with other activities and were finding it difficult to commit to the twice weekly schedule. By this time there was an established group of just four women and the rest didn't come any more.

Sessions

1. Monday 6th February
2. Wednesday 8th February
3. Monday 13th February
4. Wednesday 15th February
5. Monday 20th February
6. Wednesday 22nd February
7. Monday 6th March
8. Wednesday 8th March
9. Monday 13th March
10. Wednesday 15th March
11. Monday 20th March
12. Wednesday 22nd March
13. Monday 27th March
14. Wednesday 29th March
15. Monday 3rd April
16. Wednesday 5th April
- Easter Holidays for the children 10th April – 21st April
17. Monday 24th April
18. Wednesday 26th April
19. Wednesday 3rd May
20. Wednesday 10th May
21. Wednesday 17th May
22. Wednesday 24th May
23. Wednesday 31st May
24. Wednesday 7th June

Total 24 sessions of 1.5 hours 36 hours

Description of each session

At the woman's association group we decided to make two different sessions. One will be Monday's 3:15 to 4:45 and the other on Wednesdays also 3:15 to 4:45. This seems like a strange hour but we did it like this because most of these women are mothers and that means they have to take their children to school at 3:00 pm and then they pick them back up at 5:00 pm. So I tried to make the hours as easy as possible for them. My idea is if they are going to leave their children at 3:00 pm and not do the session until 3:30 pm would give too much time and they would probably end up doing something else rather than doing the session. This way we get them right after they drop off the children and release them right before they have to pick the children up. And the reason we have two separate days is because some of the women were available on Monday's and others were available on Wednesdays. Some of them said that they would like to come to both sessions. At the beginning I felt we should leave these as semi open sessions which means we would not restrict women who want to come twice a week but it would be better if we had a different group each of these days.

At the beginning when I took down the names I had 8 people interested in the Monday session and 3 were interested in the Wednesday. Out of the Monday session ladies, 4 of them said they would like to come on Wednesday also. This meant I would have a session of 8 people on Mondays and 8 people on Wednesdays. My experience from last year, where I worked with a groups of maximum 4 or 5 people I really did think that this year 8 people would be quite a lot and I was not really trying to get more than 8 people in each session. So I was satisfied that this was going to work.

My tutor at the women's association had got in contact with a civic centre El Centro in District 4. It is around the corner from where the women do their Spanish classes. Again we had to think of the convenience of having a centre that is very close to where they usually come to do their Spanish classes with enough space for them to be able to move. Where we would have a music system where we would be able to play music if we needed it. If it was too far from where they have their usual activity of the day that would be difficult for them to come and participate. The closer we had it to the centre of their lives the easier to maintain the consistency of the group.

The Women's association are the part of the plan for immigrants, **Plan de Accollida** for the region of District 4. They have an agreement with the centre it means that they will allow us to have the space for free. Obviously as the practice sessions are offered for free there will be no payments on my part or the women's part. Luckily the space was confirmed a week before I had my first practice session with them and we were happy with that. One problem is that I was told that every time we come, I have to ask in reception and they will tell us which room we will be in.

At the beginning I was told we would be in one room on Mondays and then switched to another room on Wednesdays. As the sessions went on, I discovered that we had to ask the receptionist about which room we would be in for every session. And nearly every single time we were in a different space. Now for a setting in any psychology session we are supposed to have the same space for every session and create a familiar environment. I was not able to do this in the Centro. Since we were given the space for free and I really wanted to do these sessions with these ladies I did not want to complain. As the months went on, I sometimes would say to the

person in reception would they please try to see we had the same space every week because it is quite disturbing that every week we have to find the different space and if we start the session before some of the other ladies arrive, as happened once, one of the women said she had to walk around for about 10 to 15 minutes trying to find us. When she could not find us she went home.

Some of these women have a very limited use of the Spanish language and feel intimidated and some are actually too shy to ask for assistance. This is the disadvantage of not having a consistent space.

1. Monday 6th February

It's the first day and I am sitting downstairs waiting for the women to arrive. At this point I am not sure how many women will actually show up from those who were on my list. As it got to 3:15 two women arrive both with strollers with a baby in them. When I had mentioned in supervision that some of the women came to Spanish class with their children it was suggested that I try to do two groups; one for women with who come with children and one with women without children. We could include the children in the sessions as a mother and child session. It was something I was not very receptive of doing. After seeing the dynamics of the women in the observation sessions it was clear that there were different groups of friends. It would have been disruptive to the women to separate them out from their friend groups because they came with their children.

These close knit groups are important in the Pakistani and Punjabi communities, these mini groups tend to do everything together. Some of the women can leave the children with the fathers, if they have a day off on the same day as the session. I felt that I needed to accommodate this situation, at least at the beginning. So at this moment I have one Panjabi lady who comes with a child and the other is a Pakistani lady.

We stayed downstairs waiting because it was the first time and they would not be able to find the room otherwise. I was told we were to be on the second floor in a room called Olivada, which basically means an olive sauce. For some reason, at this civic centre all the rooms are named in Catalan for different sauces that you would use in cooking. We are in the Olivada, the olive sauce room. We wait some more and two other ladies arrive and then 2 young girls, they are twins. They are from Pakistan but have been living in Spain for quite some time. With six people we got to the room at almost 4 o'clock because it had taken them a while to arrive. At this time we start our session.

Check in

I decided to ask some questions to get to know the women a little better. My first questions were, their age, how long had they been in Spain, how long had they been taking Spanish class, and now many children they had. These are less personal questions to start off with just to get to know them. If they have children in school, preschool children, teenagers these question are designed to find out more about them.

First Sonia is 32 years old has been in Spain for 5 years, in Spanish class for one year and she has two children: a four year old and a two year old. So she is one of the women who brought her stroller with her little boy who is two years old.

Second woman, Sita is 27 years old and also been in Spain for 5 years, in Spanish classes for one year and she has two children, a seven year old and a three year old, both are in school.

Third participant name is Jazz. She is 32 years old has been in Spain for 6 years and has two children one is 4 and the other is preschool age. She is the second mother that has brought a child in the stroller. The little girl is 17 months old.

Happy is 34 years and has been in Spain for 5 years and she has two children a 15 year old and a 17 year old. She must have got married very young. When she says her age the other women sort of laugh and say “wow you started early!”

The other two women who are 32 have very young children. After these 4 married women we have two young girls; Zoya and Zara and they both say they are 16 years old. They have been in Spain for 2 and half years. They have been learning Spanish for 6 months. Jazz and Happy have been in Spanish class for less than a year.

The Spanish class is one of the factors that brings these women together. Their day to day interaction can be seen in how long they have known each other through this avenue of community life. Their classes start on Tuesday and Thursday and begin just after they leave their children at school and pick them up at 12 or 12:30

The next question is which language to have the classes in. None of them speak Spanish very well. Even though it would have been helpful to teach in Spanish so they could practice their Spanish for a little bit. The verbal portion of the session is only 15 or 20 minutes. But the ones who have been only a short time in the Spanish class would not have the skills to express themselves properly in Spanish. Luckily I am a Punjabi speaker, I speak the same mother tongue that all of these women. I decided to do the check in and explain the sessions in a mix of Punjabi and Urdu to facilitate understanding and it would be less stressful for them at this point.

As it is the first session and they do not know what to expect and I do not know what their responses will be to my directives. I explain to them again what I am trying to achieve in these sessions we are doing together; that my aim is to provide a space where they can interact and express themselves. I explain that this is for my university practice hours and that I am expected to write up my sessions and explain what happens in them and I am expected to present them to my course tutor but one thing I make very clear to them is that I will be using nicknames and I will not be using their real names in any of the documents I write and anything they tell me in that session is confidential and also I point out to every body else in the session that we all must treat whatever we talk about and whatever happens in our sessions in a confidential way. I think this is important and sometimes if these women are going to meet in other places, for instance in their classes or on the street, this might be an inhibiting factor for them to express themselves freely in the sessions.

Between arrival, introduction and explanation most our first session is almost over, nevertheless, I decided to do a short warm up and show them what kinds of things we will be doing in the sessions. I explain to them that every week or every session what we usually do is a warm up in a circle. Asking them to feel, breath, warm up different parts of their body and that usually we will pass the leadership to different people in the circle so rather than just doing the things I am

doing they can bring their own imagination and sense of movement to the class. This is useful, because otherwise the session can end up being just a parroting of what I am doing the whole time and it's important for them to know that this is not choreographed Bollywood dance classes. I am here to facilitate their doing their own movements and interacting with each other. I hope that they understood what I am trying to say and we will see what will happen in the next few weeks.

Today because it is their first day, some of them are kind of shy. One of them laughs when I ask her to take her turn and says, this is Sonia, I never danced I don't know what to do, I told her it does not matter just feel the music. Think about it. Does this music make you want to move your feet, move your hands. What does this music say to you? She did not really know what I was trying to do or trying to say but she remember a movement from what I did in the warm up and just copied that. That is ok at least she is moving. And I had a thought afterwards, Sonia is from Pakistan. In Pakistan, due to lot of the Islamization happening in the last 20 years the performing arts do not get much support. In schools and in most settings people are not encouraged to dance or listen to music.

When I was a child going to Pakistani weddings there was a lot of dancing and merriment but this is like well over 30 years ago and the Pakistan of today does not have that much freedom.

Then maybe things have changed but Sonia being 32 years old would have probably would have been growing up doing that time when the country was going under the strict military dictatorship. I think it's important to know these things. This is probably the first time that Sonia has been asked to move to music and she will be a good subject to watch. At the moment her profile is not really relaxed nor flowing. She is very contained in her movements. I feel that her breathing is not very regular either and she is very aware of people watching her but at the same time that shy smile, she seems to be enjoying herself. I think there is a lot of work we could do with Sonia.

The two young girls were also from Pakistan but they arrived in Spain, they said two and half years ago makes them different. They are different. They are more relaxed, they do not seem to be as shy.

Even though they are not moving in a flowing way yet, it is the first session so I understand they are going to be a little bit shy. One thing I do notice, at least one of the twins, the taller one, she does movements, mimicking like what she might have seen on tv or in a Bollywood movie. The other one of the twins listens to the music and sways from side to side. It is quite strange, Zara who is the taller, thinner one makes me think of a very angular puppet with very sharp edges and when I observe her I see more elbows moving around, Her movements are very sagittal in front behind and she touches her head a lot. Even when she is moving her hips, it's a very angular abrupt movement. Whereas Zoya, the shorter twin, her movements seem more delicate more in tune with her body and does not seem like she is mimicking movements, it's very interesting.

Again it's the first session and it's really difficult to build a movement profile right away.

The Punjabi ladies Sita, Jazz and Happy; don't seem to know what to do with this kind of music. They look to me slightly shy but they try to move. When I ask them to do something they try to move a little bit more. It's the first session so I am not going to try to make any more

judgements on that. After a couple of different tunes it's to finish and we start putting things back the way we found them and that is the end of the first session.

We all say goodbye and I remind them that there is a Wednesday session. Jazz asked if she could come on the Wednesday session as well and I told her that if she wants to come she could. As for the children in the strollers the little boy slept through most of the session and the little girls would come into the circle every once in a while but she was not disturbing us in any way. So at the moment I am not going to ask them if they want a separate session. Even though it had been discussed in supervision, that women with children should be in a separate session I am not willing to oblige that decision at this time.

2. Wednesday 8th February

Today I arrived at the Centro civic centre and I asked which room we will be in today and am told we will be in the Sala Xato it is not the same room as last time. I asked the man if any of the women had arrived yet and he replied he had not seen anybody arrive yet. As it is a different room from last time, I decided to stay downstairs in the reception area and wait for them. That way we can go up together and they will not get mixed up. I waited for about 5 minutes and then told reception that I would go upstairs and start organizing the music and when they come please tell them which room to go to. When I get upstairs I see three of the woman sitting in the waiting area and they had been there since the beginning since 3:15. Happy said to me they were thinking of leaving now because they had not way of knowing if I was coming or not. Since they did not have my phone number they had no way of contacting me. I explained and I had arrived exactly at 3:15 and asked the man in reception if anyone had arrived and he said he had not seen anybody. It's a shame really. It's only my second session and it feels very unprofessional to have not been up there at the beginning punctually but there is nothing I can do if the man in reception had not bothered to look up when these women came in.

They were sitting in the waiting area because they did not know which room we were in, I told them we were in another room on the other side. It was Happy, Sonia and Jazz who were waiting. Sonia and Jazz and both come with their strollers with their little girl and little boy. The little boy had fallen asleep already. The little girl was smiling at me. This week's room is a bit smaller than the one we had last week so we have to collapse all of the tables and move them around to the corner to make a space. The tables are heavy and quite difficult to move so I will not be able to set up the session before they arrive, as I will need help.

So when the women arrive the first thing we will do is fold the tables and move them into the corner and remember to leave 5 – 10 minutes at the end of the session to put them back. On Monday we had moved the tables a little bit out of the way in the larger room but we did not put them back exactly as they were when we arrived, an email was sent to the women's association organizer, Thea, who is also my tutor, and they complained that we had not left the room in the same condition as we had found it. So now I am thankful that my sessions have already been organized to be one and half hours long because it seems we will need 5 minutes at the beginning and 5 minutes at the end to put the room back the way we found it.

We arrived and moved the tables out of the way. I take out my tablet. I am doing the same as I did last year I am taking my tablet and computer speakers that are with me in my ruck sack. It's a

bit heavy and a bit of a pain to carry all of this stuff around but at least I know that I have the music and it sounds good. I set up the music and get it all ready, the women sit down in the circle and I asked them how they are feeling, what did they think about the session last week. Happy says right away that she has got cramps in her shin because she has not jumped around so much for a while. This makes me smile because I did not really think they had moved that much last session but for her she had not done any dancing or any exercise for a very long time and so she was feeling it and the other woman Jazz also said she felt a little bit that they had done some exercise and had a little bit of cramp in one of her legs. It's nothing serious just because they had not been moving at all.

Sonia, who had never danced before, smiled and said that she was looking forward to doing more today. I asked them if they were always going to bring the children or did they have someone to leave them with. Sonia says that her husband is at work. Jazz says the days her husband is off work he will be happy to look after the little girl, she would not always be bringing her little girl with her. I decide definitively that I am not going to be doing a completely separate group for the women with children. Apart from the fact that one of them will not have her child all of the time I think to separate the group were they are all well together would actually make the two who are obliged to make a separate group feel excluded from the rest of the group. I decided that this would not be a good idea.

As we finish talking I decide to put on some music and begin the warm-up session the twins arrive quite out of breath and Zoya explains to me that the family had gone to visit a cousin of theirs who just had a new baby and they were all excited and it was a little further away from where they usually live and by the time they left there to get to the civic centre they were late. I quickly ask them how they are and we were about to start our warm-up now.

I decided to do a much more guided warm-up this time. Because they are not used to being in any dance or movement environment they are not spontaneous with their movements do they need a lot more direction in the beginning. I asked them to make a circle I put on some relaxing music, and asked them to do some deep breathing to get them situated. I think it's a good idea for Zoya and Zara who just came running from a different place and probably feeling a bit stressed. I tell them to breathe deeply, put their hands on their abdomen region and feel when they are breathing their hand goes outwards. Breathing out they should press all the air out. They concentrate on how their hand should feel the abdomen against the palm of their hand. This is a very good technique to use if they are feeling stressed or nervous about something. It's a breathing technique they can use before an exam for instance, the younger ones. And this is something that they can use in different situations. I explain this to them.

Once we have done the deep breathing and got everybody concentrating more we start moving different parts of the body, I ask them to stretch out their hands above them using all the space around them, moving their legs from side to side, doing some turns and twists just really getting them into the mood and getting their body all ready for movement.

I had seen last time that there is one thing that is similar with the women in the group even though they are different age groups and some are from Pakistan some are from India, they are all from the Punjabi region, which had the same tradition years ago. They have the same

language Panjabi, which is the language we are using in our sessions. I found some music which is like traditional music women used to dance at weddings and at different events. There are also traditional songs that young girls would sing along to in school. I thought I would try this music to see what would happen if we used music with rhythms that they are more used to. So I played that and straight away Happy and Jazz who are from India they started moving and it was amazing to see. The movement profiles in the more formal setup, “let’s do the warm-up, let’s see who the leader is”, completely changed when they are listening to their own music, music they feel, music they have danced to before that transports them back to a different moment. Maybe when they were much younger or maybe when they were with their friends at weddings. It was amazing to watch Jazz and Happy, their faces changed, their movement profile changed, they were spinning and clapping their hands smiling and interacting with each other and Sonia who was the one who had not had any exposure to dance laughed and tried to copy some of their movements. Not in as an enthusiastic way as they were moving, but I could see her smiling at me shyly to see if I was noticing that she is moving.

What was quite funny was the two younger girls, whose probably only real exposure to dance, at least in a traditional music sense had only been in Bollywood movies, not in their own family environment. They seemed so happy and they got behind Happy and Jazz to show them the movements and they started copying. It was amazing to see this interaction with all the women dancing together to these traditional songs that I had also heard as a child. I remember when I went to a wedding when I was 10 and was taken to Pakistan to meet my relatives for the first time ever. It was my cousins wedding and we had all this music sung live by the neighbourhood women.

Now they are dancing Gidda, the traditional dance that Punjabi women do, clapping their hands in a circle and twisting and turning and it’s a dance where every so often a pair of women go into the circle and dance with each other together in a sort of challenging way. Then one goes out of the circle and other one comes in or the pair both go out of the circle and another pair comes in and the people around the edge of the circle just keep clapping in time to the music. This kind of dynamic to a lesser extent was happening in front of me, It was good to watch. It made me feel really happy and really relaxed and it took me back to a time of seeing these kinds of dances more than 30 years ago. I think today the session was very interesting from that point of view. I really do feel a bit sad for Sonia considering that she had not been able to express herself in body movement at all. It is something that has not been made available to her because of where she was born and how she was brought up. I find that quite sad. I do not know how to explain it but I think it is something. These women are from the same place my parents came from I see maybe some reflection of people that I know in my own family. It’s curious; it isn’t the same detachment that I can feel in sessions with people from other backgrounds. It’s something I am going to need to think about and investigate a little bit more about my own transference and counter-transference I am feeling in these sessions.

The session goes by quite quickly and we have to put the room back the way we found it. I remind them with have another session on Monday and also thinking about what happened at the beginning of the session. They did not have my number and there was no way for them to get in touch with me. I asked them if they would like to set up a whatsapp group so we can communicate to each other in case someone is late or on their way, or ill or if I am caught in a

jam, like maybe the metro is stuck and I need to be able to communicate with them. We exchanged phone numbers and I told them I would set up a whatsapp group so we can keep in touch and give each other information

3. Monday 13th February

Today when it was time for me to leave home for me to go the session it was raining very heavily. I was looking at my whatsapp to see if I got any messages saying where they would come or not come to the session and the fact that they usually take the children to school at 3 some of them might have gone home and not bothered to come today. So I arrived at the centre and was pleasantly surprised that two of the women were waiting for me. There was Sita and Happy. They were there already. They said “Even if it rains we are here. This is like so much fun; we do not want to miss these sessions.”

Happy was saying today her husband was at home and he asking her to stay at home with him, she seemed very pleased to be able to say to him that she had something else planned already and that he could stay at home for a few hours by himself, she was going to leave to come to her session. It was funny because she seemed very proud to have something to do instead of waiting at home for her husband to have a day off to decide to do something with her. They explained to me that Sonia, the one with the son in the pram, would not be coming today and they saw her the day before and her son had a cold and that means considering its raining so much she would not risk coming out with him in the rain to a session. They did not know anything about Jazz, the woman that comes with the little girl, she did not come either. We assumed that the she did not come because of the rain.

We started the session with two of them. Happy was talking about the fact that even though her husband was at home she came out anyway and it was raining she was there. That was a good sign she felt committed and felt like they wanted to be in the sessions. So far the other women who signed up, beside the children, have not come. I was a bit worried whether this was going to end up being two sessions a week of one and half hours and only the same two or three people would bother to show up. But its only session three and I am going to be positive and hopefully more of them will start to show up.

Zoya and Zara showed up about 10minutes later. They explain that they live a little bit further away. They live on the other side of Plaza Espanya a very long walk and they have to have lunch with their parents before they are allowed to come out. I don't want to push them on the punctuality. I would rather they come and come late than feel pressure as to always be there on time. So again it's something I have to be cautious about because these are open sessions that they have to come to voluntarily and It's not my job to pull their socks up and call them on being late so by the time they are all there and we finished the checking in its like already a 20 minutes had gone by.

I am trying in every session to use more of the dance movement therapy technique with different kinds of interventions. I am conscious of the fact that I cannot make these sessions very technical. It is important that these women have a space to play, where they can get back in touch with their inner child.

There is always a doubt whether we should be doing text book interventions or whether fact that these ladies are coming to a session and being together forming connections to each other and are not just sitting in a class learning Spanish or meeting to pick up their children. That should also be looked at as therapeutic not just the formal exercises. That does not mean that I am not having a therapeutic influence on these women. The sessions with these women always finish with more questions than answers.

We start off in a circle, do the warm up and I encourage them to take the lead. I point to the person next to me and she has to perform one of her own movements, she points to the women next to her and we go around the room like this for 10 minutes where everybody gets a chance to show their own movements and have the group copy and do what movements they are doing. Then I ask them to walk around the room, not in a circle but just walking around the room and I ask them to concentrate on the way they are treading. How are they feeling their feet on the ground. Do they tread with all their foot? Do they feel how their toes are feeling inside their shoes? I encourage them to walk firmly and feel that and make an effort to make some noise with their feet to the music. This would be a typical grounding exercise where we are making people get in touch with their surroundings and feeling where they are right now in time with the music and then I ask them to now walk on tiptoes. Just putting their toes on the ground this makes them giggle a little. Then one of them starts putting her elbows out to the side like a little chicken and then they all start copying and giggling while they are walking around on their tiptoes.

Then I ask them to put the weight only on the heels with the toes in the air. Then they all start walking and giggling. This makes them giggle even more because this makes them feel like they are waddling like little geese. Then they have to try and walk just stepping on the outside of the foot. Again all of these suggestions are met with lots of giggles. They must think like I am making them do this for my own visual entertainment. When I asked them to walk on the inside of their feet they started being knock knees and this was more difficult. They are concentrating on different parts of their feet it actually makes them more conscious of their own body. Maybe that concentration of being in that actual moments makes them be more in the moment.

With both DMT sessions we are not expecting the participants to verbalize every moment what they are feeling but to be conscious of their own sense. I don't know up until what point they begin to understand and go with the flow. I ask them to lift their feet in military fashion, this is met with more giggles and we walked like hands out marching marching around and after this exercise I just let them move however they wanted to. I told them that I was going to leave them and let them be. You could walk with somebody else or be on your own and do whatever you feel like doing just listen to the music and go with the flow. After a few minutes of this exercise I could see that they were running out of steam now is the time to put on the traditional Punjabi music.

The moment they hear the first two beats they suddenly come alive, they start clapping their hands and forming a circle and go full on into the Punjabi dances, at least the two from the Indian Punjab begin to do that. The two younger girls are fascinated by this music and these movements and they join in and its quite fun to watch because there is a certain point in the song where it talks about a woman being chased by a suitor. One of the women, Sita, takes her veil from around her neck and makes a turban like man by tying it around her head. She makes more

masculine movements and starts running around after the younger girls who pretend to be shooing him away and giggle.

The other two are watching and with big smiles on their face. I remember seeing this in a few Bollywood movies, usually at the henna party, where it's only woman and they are all dancing together and sometimes they do these kinds of scene depictions. One would pretend to be the groom and one would pretend to be the bride and they would make fun of the girls who was going to get married and say this is your husband and you are running away or things like that. It's strange for me to see this in a DMT session even if it is very interesting.

Our session comes to an end and I remind them that we will see each other on Wednesday

4. Wednesday 15th February

Today we had quite a huge turnout for the session. I had the ones that were coming for the last two weeks Zoya and Zara, the twins; Jazz with her little girl. Sonia, the Pakistani lady who never danced before did not come today,. I am surprised she did not come and I felt she was really getting into it. She did not come on Monday because her son was ill. I am assuming that is why she did not come again.

Some new people came to this session. These sessions are semi-open which means people can come to the sessions at any time. Pree, is a good friend of Jazz. She tells me she used to come to the Spanish sessions at the women's association. Now she is taking classes at a different centre which is why I haven't met her before. Jazz told her about of what we do in the sessions and she wanted to join.

Pree is 30 years old and has been in Spain for 6 years. She has two children one is 10 and one is 9. Another Punjabi lady has come her name is Pam, she is 27 years old has a 3 year old child who is at nursery school and a 32 year old lady called Deepa. I am using shortened versions of their Punjabi names rather than inventing nicknames for them as it will get very confusing for me as time goes on.

A third woman who I have not seen before, Selma is Bangladeshi. I saw her at some of the sessions during the observation phase, she has a funny childlike face she is 28 and she has only been here a few years, she has picked up the Spanish very quickly. She has features like an imp, that is what she reminds me of an imp, very mischievous smile and full of life. I am hoping she is going to bring a lot of movement to the group.

Anoo is also from Bangladesh and a friend of Selma. Anoo came with a little boy in the pram so today we have two children in strollers.

Check in

I ask them how they are, what is happening since the last time we saw each other which was on Monday. It's funny because Happy said she had a lot of cooking to do this evening but she left out the onions and garlic and gave her older son instructions on how to cut it all up and get it ready before she came home. This seems to amuse her a lot because usually she would be at

home preparing all of the food and this time she basically delegated it to her son and it seems like she had taken a bold move.

It sets off a chain reaction in the other women and they start talking about who does the cooking in their house. None of them have jobs so obviously they are homemakers and they are the ones who do all of the cooking. Jazz says that her husband works in a restaurant, he is actually a cook's assistant in a restaurant. On his days off he will sometimes do the cooking and she does not have to worry about doing it cooking on that day. Deepa said that her husband never lifts a finger in the kitchen she has to do all of the cooking herself. It's good to see how they all open up and are getting more confident in the space to actually talk about things. The two younger girls obviously are too young to have partners. They explain that it is the mother who does the cooking and they will sometimes help her but their father does not help out in the kitchen. This could open up all sorts of discussions about feminism and men helping out.

They are homemakers and they are home with the children and because they are home most of the time they are expected to have the food ready. There would be no kind of argument for them not to be doing household chores when it's the husbands who bring in all of the money. But still it's interesting that some of them do take a stand. It was Happy who said that her husband had asked her if she wanted to go out shopping with him on his day off but as it was the same day as our DMT session she said no, she already had plans. She was happy having a different space that did not depend on her husband providing her entertainment. She is not waiting for him to come home to suggest something for her to do. I think that this is quite interesting in this context. If you think about all of these women who have immigrated into Spain from their home countries, from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh or the Indian Punjab they arrive here after their husbands have been here for maybe 5 or 10 years. Once their husbands have found a steady job they apply through a system called *agrupación familiar* which means they are applying for family regroupment. That whole process enables them to bring their families to Spain to live. They have to show a certain amount of years worked and they also have to be able to show living quarters where they will be able to live with their families. Once they satisfy all of these requirements they are then able to bring their families over. Most of the time these women arrive not knowing anybody else. They usually have children or they get pregnant right away so their whole lives revolve around their husbands, his needs and then bringing up the children. They tend to not have much else to do.

The good thing about the Women's association in the District plan is that they are providing free Spanish classes or classes that are heavily subsidized by the government so maybe they only pay 10 or 20 euros for a whole trimester for classes. This makes it easily affordable and they are doing it in the morning after taking the children to school and their husbands are at work. So they do not have to ask permission to be away from the family during the day and they do not have to pay for childcare either. This is one of the reasons why those who have children of preschool age bring them to the Spanish classes.

I think that is a good thing that they have this space but there was nothing for them to do in the afternoon because the centre only provides morning activities. Even though there is a Zumba like aerobics class on a Friday, the attendance at this class is sporadic. I think I am finding in the classes I am organizing first of all I speak Punjabi, which means they feel quite comfortable

expressing themselves and letting me into a lot more than if they were with a Spanish person. They do not have enough command of Spanish to be able to express themselves freely. And also a lot of the things they talk about are conversations they have with each other. As someone who understands the language I can really participate without having to ask questions for them to answer. I just absorb the atmosphere and listen to what they are saying. So it's a different kind of space. There is a chance for them to come out on a Monday and Wednesday to be in a session in the afternoon. They seem quite enthusiastic about doing something different and in having something to do.

At least in Happy's case, because she is actually very expressive and verbalizes all of these things. Sometimes I see the other women nodding as she is explaining, And maybe a lot of them are in agreement even though they don't express it in the same way as her.

Today we have two new people Selma and Anoo who are from Bangladesh. In Bangladesh they speak Bengali which is a completely different language, different alphabet everything from Punjabi but because in most of part of India people understand spoken Hindi which is a language that is used in Bollywood movies. People in Pakistan, most of northern India, places like Nepal and Bangladesh understand the movies so if we switch to speaking Hindi, which is very similar to Punjabi except it has a more formal structure then they will also be able to understand what we are saying. I also say some things to them in Spanish if I think they are not understanding what we are saying in Hindi. The Punjabi women quickly switch to the more formal Hindi because we can all understand that so there is not a language barrier even though we have women from Bangladesh.

When we start the warm up, of course the circle is bigger it's more of a dynamic circle as I do the usual things like starting them off getting them into the session, breathing exercises than warming up different parts of their body, now they feel at this moment getting them into the session so they are not talking or thinking about stuff that is happening outside the session their usual daily life. And then I pass on the leadership to different people. Selma is the one that moves a lot and she finds kindred spirits in the younger girls who are very much into Bollywood dancing and Bollywood music even though I try not to use Bollywood music as much. I put a couple of songs warm up session. The problem with Bollywood is not that they start singing along to the songs but that they also start mimicking the movements they would have seen in the movies. I lose whether they are expressing their own movement profiles or copying what they saw on the tv screen. The Punjabi women do not do this but one of the twins, Ilk, the taller of the two, really gets into it. I see Selma is the same and they start dancing together and start mimicking and laughing at the moves the lady does in the movie because it is quite a sexy song and so they really get down. the Punjabi women become spectators and laugh and try to mimic some of the moves its quite nice as an ice breaker.

This time I have brought veils with different colours and sequins. I thought I would introduce some props and I give them out they each take a different color. They start playing around with the veils. I ask them to form groups of two because there are many of them and do a little bit of group work. One of them doing some movements while the other one copies her movements and then change and have the other woman lead the movements. This way I get them to have some

sort of dialogue between each other moving and see how they can develop and how their movements change when they are actually working together in partners.

Today's session I felt was a lot more dynamic because we had a lot more people and there were new people. I hope the new people will come back next time. I will see what happens. At the end of the session I get them back into the circle to relax do some stretching exercises. While we are doing the stretching one of them starts talking about going home to cook. The young girls are talking about visiting their auntie, the one who just had a child. Right away they are able to disengage from the session and start thinking about their lives outside of the sessions. It is difficult to have the text book sessions where we are supposed to have a check in and after doing all of the movement exercises we are supposed to again talk to see how they feel. In the end we just do the stretching and then put the room back the way we found it. We all leave. Some of them have left earlier because they are in a hurry to pick up their children.

5. Monday 20th February

Today we have 7 women arrive, Sita, Zoya, Zara, Jazz, Sat, Deepa and Selma. Pam has not come back since the last session and Happy is not here. I am surprised because Happy seems to be the one to enjoy these sessions more than anyone else, so it's strange she is not here. Sita informs me that Happy had a doctor's visit at the hospital that is why she is not here. Anoo who only came once last week has not come back. It does not surprise me in a way because when she came last time she had a very young boy baby about 18 months old in the stroller and anytime she got up to do anything in the session he kept screaming. And this was quite disruptive for the participants. She really could not do anything she had to sit with him or pick him up or sit with him. This was not something that was going to work. I said to Anoo it would probably be a good idea for her to find someone to watch the child while she attended or otherwise I did not see how she would actually fit in. I know this is a semi open group and we are supposed to be letting people come whenever they can but a very disruptive very young child who needs his mother's attention the whole time, I don't think it helps to have her being stressed in the session trying to join in and her trying to look after the child at the same time. So she has not come back.

We start off with a quick chat as to how they are doing and today they want to get up and move. The check in session is very short.

We move the tables and chairs out of the way. They quickly say hello to each other and to me. When I ask them how they are they all say they are ok and they are really looking forward to dancing and moving. Also as Happy is not here there is a different dynamic. She brings up different kinds of subjects, for example, she is the one who talked about her husband being at home or having her son cut up the onions and garlic to get it ready for the food. Because she is not here it looks like the rest of them don't really bother to bring subjects to discuss. They are more focused on the fact that this is a dance session or in their minds they call it "dance class". They say it's a dance class we are here to move. Or some of them think they are doing an aerobic exercise class. It does not matter what they think they are doing, I just want to get them involved in the sessions. It's telling that Sonia, the Pakistani lady with the child has not come back. I had looked forward to getting her to loosen up and find her dance moves. Maybe she has lost the impetus to come because of not being able to come when her son was ill. I have not

heard anything from her again and none of the other women can actually tell me much. They say yes, they have seen her in the Spanish classes and that she says she does not have much time or that she is not feeling well and she is not going to come to the DMT sessions. I don't press because it is a voluntary session and if somebody does not want to come I cannot send messages to make them come. It's a shame because the two sessions she was with us, I saw that there really was some opening up on her side and feel that she could have gained a lot from coming to these sessions.

It is something I am going to be probably that I am feeling from the last few sessions that the ones who are coming and taking part are the ones that have the certain "joie de vivre" that enjoy moving and probably a lot more open. It would have been nice to have gotten the ones who are a bit closed and a little less used to moving their body and who are probably in a more restrictive relationship or come from a more restrictive culture. But again I am doing practice and need to do what I can with the people that are coming. This is something I probably need to address if I were going to dedicate myself further to this group of people. Being a group of women from South Asia or in the case of Sonia who is from a Muslim family. It brings me back to thinking about how Muslim women are expected to behave or how Islamization of a country when they are actually saying and preaching, dancing, music and enjoying yourself are evil. How can you get dance movement therapy across to people who are being indoctrinated with those kinds of feelings. And that even if they are enjoying the movement when they are in a dance class or aerobics class that maybe in the back of their mind they have this little thing that is telling them that this is something they should not be doing.

How can you use dance movement therapy in that kind of setting. There are questions that I need to ask myself and requires deeper study and my own counter transference or transference, I can never, it's difficult to see which is which. I am also from a Muslim family and I remember as a three year old dancing in front of the TV my brother who is younger than me saying, Stop dancing, Muslim women don't dance you should not be doing that. My parents thought it was quite funny that he would have this idea already. And you know that is just an example of someone even at a young age not even two years old, already feeling comfortable in his masculinity. Him being a boy that he can actually tell a female, we are talking about a child context, that she should not dance or should not move, that this is not the right thing to do. So this starts at a very young age. Even though I come from an orthodox family but it's not a fundamentalist family, we are not that strict but still that if these kind of idea about moving and dance, cultural in general are prevalent in even kind of modern orthodox families how much worse is it going to be in families that are more orthodox going toward much more fundamentalist idea. It is almost like women should not even be seen and definitely not heard. It's their need to get married and have kids.

I think this is something I feel because I have seen it in my family and around me and this is what these women that are being brought across to be with their husbands they are not really supposed to protest about anything or do much other than look after the children and make sure the food is cooked and ready for when the husband comes home. It makes me feel bad but it's not something I can get involved in. I have to recognize that it is something that makes me feel bad and makes me sort of despair for the future development in our culture.

Of course, contrasting with this, I have the two younger girls there and that actually gives me hope. They are the twins from a Pakistani family and I am not sure their family knows that come to a Dance Therapy session. They go to the Spanish classes every morning or to computer class or English class. All of these classes are available to them at a very subsidized rate or even free sessions. Instead of their parents expecting them to sit at home and learn to cook, sew and clean they are being allowed to go out. They have not actually been put into formal education. They have been sporadically between Spain and Pakistan, off and on so their parents have not actually put them into school. Zara said to me that they were trying to get access to college. I doubt that very much because they have also been talking about their parents looking at possible suitors for them. I remember saying to Zara that that is a bit sudden considering that you are only 16 at which point they both said to me in an aside, they are actually 18 years old, over 18 but when they were filling out the regroupment, papers to bring the children to be with the father they actually put their ages a couple of years less on the passport and I understand that this is something that used to be done even when my parents were coming over.

A lot of the times when a regroupment is done in another country children who are dependents get an automatic visa to come with their parents but if they are over 18 they end up being left behind. It is something that touches a cord with me because in our family two of my older sisters had already been married off in anticipation of my mother leaving the country. They were married at 15 and 16. Back in those days they were puberty age and they were ready to be married off. They were packed off and happily married. I met them years later and they were happy. The problem is that my parents decided not to have their passports made so years later when immigration was closed they were never able to come and visit us in England. Or meet any of the family that had not gone to visit Pakistan. Then later on their children were never able to come to England and be with the rest of the cousins who were children of the other sisters who actually got a chance to immigrate. Again it's something I understand and feel because it's something quite close to me because my mother never forgave herself later years for never having made the papers and brought over these other daughters because then there were times they had a hard time in Pakistan and their children had a hard time. If they had come over to England when she came over with the younger daughters then their children would have had a better life and would have had full rights to live in Europe and they never did get to do that. So then more things I feel very personally working with women from this culture. I understand a lot more and it affects me a lot more.

The women are getting used to the dynamics of the session. They know there will be a warm up, they know at some point they will be expected to lead the circle and it's not a surprise or shy when it's their turn. Again they are gaining confidence and I think at some point I will start to see their own movement profiles and not mimicry of things they have seen on TV or in video clips on the Indian MTV. And that is good I feel like we are making some progress. I brought the veils again and again they take them and they have fun with them.

Zara and Zoya, the younger ones, take the veils and make like a makeshift sari where they wrap it around their bodies and put one end over their shoulder like the Indians do. I know that makes them laugh and feel like they are in a fantasy world because Pakistani families don't wear saris. They think of it as a Hindu thing and they would have seen this kind of thing in Indian movies so for them they are getting into a fantasy world and playing with the veils in this way.

When the Punjabi music comes on, the traditional music again the circle is formed and they start clapping and doing the traditional dance moves and when the funny song comes on about the man and the woman Sita again wraps the veil around her head and starts chasing one of the girls and they start laughing and playing and again its quite fun. Sita is older she is married she's 27 even though she seems older but her playful side comes out when she enacts these funny games in the villages when the girls pretend to be boys and I think it's quite fun for Zara and Zoya who are usually the ones who are playing and flirting again coming from a restrictive culture they would not have had boyfriends. As a suitor will be found for them and they will be married off when they are old enough. So this kind of game playing when they are flirting with a man or boy and in this song where it's all about a young women who is in love with him. It is good because I understand what is going on, I also come from a family where I have lived with these cultural nuances.

The session comes to an end we put the chairs back in the proper places and we do a quick circle to say goodbye do some stretching and they leave.

6. Monday 27th February

This was a Monday session after the carnival weekend. I arrive and waited for about 15 minutes because that is usually the time some of them arrive. I thought well let's wait as long as possible and when I was 30 minutes waiting and no one had showed up, I decided to send a message to our group chat and then I got a reply from Jazz is saying that in Catalunya the Monday of Carnival is a day off and the school is closed today. No one said anything to me thinking I would know this. I obviously thought there was a session. When I spoke about absences in the supervision we have been told that if we are actually there present and no one else arrives it still counts as a session, so this is Session 6 and nothing happened.

7. Monday 6th March

I arrive and I am not really sure who will show up today because no one came to the previous session 27 February. I couldn't come on Wednesday 1st March because I had to go out of town to do some special workshops. And as we have been two sessions that we did not have dance therapy, I was a bit worried that no one would turn up this time.

I sent a whatsapp message the night before reminding everyone that we had a session the next day. I thought this would actually be a better idea than me arriving and no one showing up. Also they could not say they were not sure if there was a session or not. I had a couple of them saying yes we are coming so I thought, "Ok good."

About 10 minutes after I arrive Pree and Jazz showed up and they told me that Happy was on the way so that was good. At least 3 of them were going to come. And then when Happy arrived she came with Sita. After we had been talking for a few sessions I actually found out that Happy and Sita live in the same house, they are married to two best friends and so these two men came over from India together and they both work in the same restaurant as kitchen helps and so when they were doing the paper work for the regroupment for families they actually decided to rent an apartment together. They told me it's a three bedroom apartment, they have the two best friends and wives, Sita and Happy. Sita said her brother also lives there so the basically have a room each. Considering they have children too I use my imagination as to how they live in this

apartment, but she says it's quite big. That's why usually if Sita comes Happy will come also. And they will usually arrive late and at the same time.

Pree and Jazz also tend to come together. Jazz is not so dependent on her friend so if she wants to come she will come even if she comes alone. Her and Pree used to know each other in India and so when their husbands came over then they were brought over they were already friends. Sita and Happy's their husbands knew each other when they came over and they are also from an area in the Punjab that is quite close to each other so that already knew each other and they also live in the same house so they are friends. Or even almost relatives because the husbands are best friends. So they call each other sister-in-law and so do Pree and Jazz.

This means when the 4 of them are there together alone without anybody else they tend to really gel together and joke around a lot. There are a lot of inside jokes in Punjabi which I have to concentrate very hard to understand what they are saying. For example, today when they arrived the joke of the day was, Happy said that her husband was really happy that she was coming to these sessions because she was getting a lot of exercise and she wanted to look good and she said that her husband had started going to the gym and that he is looking so slim and so fine that she wants to grab him and cuddle him all of the time. I am sure she means more than cuddle because everyone started giggling.

And all of a sudden the conversation was about the husbands. Sita said her husband had a bit of a paunch so he was a cuddly teddybear. And Pree said her husband likes to eat a lot but she is keeping him on his toes. Jazz just giggled a lot. I noticed that as the twins did not come today, and they are much younger, the four women don't usually talk about sexy things. Today they are letting it all out, about how much the husband would turn around in the middle of the night and they try to say no it's late or I have to wake up with the kids. Basically it's lots of funny silly things. Like I said there were a lot of inside jokes also a lot of Punjabi slang was being use so I had to really concentrate hard to understand what they were saying. Some points I would say Happy I did not get that and she would say that Pree is talking dirty, she has a dirty mouth. So I would just assume that she was talking about some crude sexual stuff.

It was nice to see that they were feeling relaxed and happy in these sessions. They were opening up and just letting go. It was really a change and it made me think again about having the two younger girls in the session with them was something that kept their conversations under control because they were wary of the fact that the two girls were much younger and don't have any sexual experience and maybe it would be embarrassing to talk about these things in front of them.

I was surprised that Sonia had not come. I am saying surprised but maybe not really surprised. She has not been for the last few sessions. She only came for the first two and I am just thinking that maybe with each passing week she does not feel like she wants to come, or that she has missed so much already, or maybe she feels she does not fit in with all of these woman. They are much more relaxed and open and much more in touch with their bodies when they are moving and dancing. It's a shame really, it makes me feel quite sorry for Sonia and it might have been a nice idea to try to do a session for her but I am not sure she would have even been willing to do individual sessions.

I also have to realize that these women are here. Primarily they are homemakers, they are looking after their children, they need to look after their husbands, they need to be there and that coming to a dance therapy session is probably not the first priority for most of them. With these Punjabi women who are really fun and relaxed and they seem to have more “modern” relationships with their husbands, if we talk about in Indian terms, they do not feel obliged to be sitting at home and submissive. I have not a chance to see Sonia again. It is not clear what her motivations are I can only imagine why she is not coming to the session any more.

One of the things that make me feel a little bit of, I don’t know, I don’t want to use the word a failure, but like I started off with this idealistic idea that I was going to have sessions with a mix of women from different places in south Asia so I would have the Punjabi sikh women mixed in with the Muslim Pakistani ladies and Bangladeshi, some of them are Hindu some of them are Muslim. One of my objectives had been dance therapy as a means to intergration between these woman. They tend to come together along religious or country lines even though they can understand each other in the same language. So it’s not a language thing.

In observation; in the Spanish classes the Punjabi women, if it is a cold day came dress in long sleeved tops with sweat pants and sports shoes or if they are wearing Punjabi clothes they tend to be with like a pair of warm leggings and trainers if they are wearing Punjabi caftan. Where as the Muslim ladies were usually wearing full on traditional dress and their heads covered so there is a visual difference already. The Bengali women are sort of in the middle of these they are not quite extreme to one side or the other. When they sat around the table in Spanish class they group together along their country of origin lines.

It is like what I thought I was going to do has not happened and sometimes am I really doing dance therapy or is this just playing space where they come and dance a little, a space to chat and have a good time. I don’t know but I also think that when you create a space for people to come and talk and let go, a place where they are listening to their Punjabi music which they don’t usually put on unless they are at a wedding. So maybe it is dance therapy when people are relaxing and letting go and finding a safe space where they can talk about anything and they feel comfortable talking about anything. I won’t say it worries me but makes me questions what exactly is the function of my sessions for these women.

Today, I play a funny song that was played at a lot of Indian weddings. Sas Kutni, which basically means I am going to beat my mother-in-law. It’s a man singing as if he were a woman.

He is basically saying “My mother-in-law is such a bitch I am going to take her behind the shed and beat her when my husband is not around.”

It’s kind of fun when it is played at wedding because it’s making fun out of the grooms family. It makes the bride and her friends laugh. It’s a funny song. I played that, they all started dancing and singing away. And then Happy said but my mother-in-law is such a babe, she is such a wonderful woman. She is not one of these women this song is talking about. They start talking about their mothers-in-law. Their mothers-in-law were very happy to see them when they were back in India and they had a very good relationship with them.

Again they started opening up about their husbands, their relationship with their mother-in-law and that was quite interesting.

Anyway getting back to my ideas and the fact that it did not happen I actually had a conversation with my tutor at the Association, Thea, I told her that I felt like I was not actually meeting my first objectives that I thought about when I started doing the dance therapy with the women's group. She said to me that it's still relevant even if I started off with a hypothesis of what I was going to do or what I was going to achieve. It's also a good idea to document and keep going, to say what I have thought I was going to do and if you are doing any kind of investigation or any kind of new ideas its also important to be able to say this what I thought would happy and this didn't happen. So, ok I feel a little bit calmer about it. Maybe my objective now is to just to create a space and try to have some form of therapeutic relationship with these women and see what happens in the next session.

8. Wednesday 8th March

It was quite the opposite of the session before, today I have only the twins. They arrive in a rush, explaining that they had to do some stuff for their mother and forgot the time and because they live quite far away it takes them more time to here. I checked the whatsapp group messages and I did not receive any replies or messages saying the women were going to be late or not coming.

Its like this group does not work on the whatsapp, they seem to forget to send messages to say if they are coming late or not coming at all, at least to keep me in the loop.

As it was just the two of them it will help me concentrate on the way the move and trying to do different exercises with them. So we do a warmup and again a typical circular warmup and I focus on the fact that they have quite opposite movement profiles. The taller skiinner one, one of the twins seem to be the more dominate one at least in movement. Because the other one looks more towards her to see what kind of movement she is doing to copy her. And again I am struck by how she has angular movements and seems to be all elbows and legs. She seems to be at that awkward stage where she doesn't know what her body is doing. She seems to have very little body consciousness. Also she is quite tall. I remember seeing something like this about 5 years ago, a 14 year old had suddenly shot up and became very tall and her mother sent her to Bollywood dance classes to me because she said her daughter did not seem to know how to move her body and she did not seem to have much consciousness or awareness of how her body had changed or knew that it had but had not grown into it.

The shorter of the twins, even though it looks like she is looking toward the other twin for her movement ideas, I actually look at her and feel that she seems to be more secure in herself and that she is taking the lead more. The taller one Zara wants to be the dominant one and wants to be followed and the other twin Zoya seems to let her. That is quite strange, because when I was watching them in the group sessions I always though Zoya did not know what to do or wasn't sure how to move and Zoya was always looking to Zara for ideas. But today with just the two of them with me alone I feel like that is not the case I do really feel that Zoya is the more secure one Secure enough in herself to be gracious to let the other twin take the lead. I am not sure it that sounds right but that is what I feel at this moment watching them in the warm-up. Just to see what else we can get out of it, I asked them if they would do a follow the leader exercise so that way they have to keep passing the movements from one to the other and that way not one of them is leading all of the time. And again what I see is like Zara tends to have these movements like spokes out of a wheel more like the centre of her body is the centre of the wheel and she seems to be all arms and legs, like a daddy long legs insect.

So half an hour into our session the door is suddenly thrown open and Selma comes running in. Selma is the Bangladeshi woman who only came to one session before and she is the one whose face lit up and she was running and jumping around she seemed so happy to be there. She runs in apologizing, saying, "Sorry I am late I have been running around trying to look for the room where you are in."

We were not in the room we were in when the time she came before. Obviously when we are ready to start the session I close the door because with the door open not only does the music disturb others but we don't have private space. They seem to be quite reticent about popping their heads in doors and asking. They don't realize they cannot hear the music from outside the door. They don't tend to come in.

I told her that I was surprised she had not been here for a many weeks, "I thought you were not coming any more".

She said, "No, I love these sessions, I love being here and today my son was ill and I left him with my husband for him to look after him and then I have come. I really feel like I want to do this. I need to move I need to dance."

Our warmup is over but she joins in whatever we are doing at the moment. And because I found previously that the girls tend to just ape or mimic the Bollywood tunes I have been using music that is more like Buddha Bar kind of oriental tunes with oriental instruments. Today I have not been using the Bollywood songs so far. I thought that would make Zoya and Zara concentrate more on instruments and on how their bodies feels rather than keep mimicking words from the Bollywood songs.

I ask her if she wants to use anything of the material that I brought. These days I bring my backpack with veils and some ankle bells and this time I have actually brought some hip scarves, the ones that make lots of noise, with coins hanging, that the belly dancers use. I thought these are not part of Indian culture and something we don't actually see much of or use and that would be quite fun for them to put on because they would be something that they have not used before.

They put them on and start shaking their hips and moving around and laughing. It's quite good because Zara who is the daddy long legs stick figure and she is the kind of girl who does not actually use much of her hip region, just her arms, shoulders and legs. I find using the money hip scarf they make more movement like indirect movements back and forth and she makes like little flirty faces at her sister. It's a change in her facial expression and not just in her body movement. Selma gets into right away. A huge smile on her face, happy to be moving and the three of them start doing what they would imagine a belly dancer does. And start using their hips and picking up the other veils and covering their faces or covering their heads, pretending to be Arabic women dancing.

I think my summary of today's session was that it was interesting to have the twins alone. Interesting to see this dynamic which has always been there but I have not actually noticed before. It was nice that Selma arrived and it is quite telling, last session I only had the Punjabi

ladies and this time the twins and Selma who are Muslims. I know these things are not happening on purpose, they are not arranging them it's something that happened and worth noting for me

9. Monday 13th March

Today I have Sita, Jazz, Happy, Pree and they bring along another friend who is also Punjabi, and they introduce her as Bevi. The twins don't come today and again it's a different kind of atmosphere. It's all of the older ladies. I say "older" because the age group is between twenty seven and thirty five, so they are not really old ladies, they are married young and have children, compared to the eighteen year old twins they are much older.

They start talking about their body image. One of them says she feels really fat and they start talking about their belly fat. The fact that after having babies they have not actually managed to lose the fat. One of them has got a quite big belly and Happy who is the one that has got a 15 and 17 year old child, her body seems to be much fitter and has less of a belly but obvious she is not one of the ones who had a child two years or three years ago it's a difference there. They talk about their bodies and the fact that they would like to lose a little bit more weight, feel a little bit better about their bodies. Then they start teasing each other about babies, about their husbands and their conversation, it's quite funny when they sit down and start talking freely like that between themselves it's almost like the kind of conversations women would be having in the kitchen by themselves and their husbands are in the other room. In this case the men are at work. Jazz has come without the little girl, it's like the third time after the time when her daughter was feeling a little ill and she left her at home with the husband. Now when he is on his day off the little girl stays at home with him. He looks after the girl while she comes out to the sessions.

This is also something quite good because if they are expected to always have their children with them every time they go out to do any activity, it is nice that they can leave them at home with the husband's sometimes.

It's quite nice now that every time Wednesday of the DMT sessions Jazz' husband takes the responsibility of being with the little girl. Jazz says she happier staying with the dad because it is a novelty for her she is usually always with her mother. This has now become, the two hours he stays home with the child, father and baby time and he happily stays with her. The probably stay just having a siesta and he stays in bed with the little girl but he is taking the responsibility and his wife has this chance to come out to the sessions. And this is usually Wednesday because Wednesday is the day he has off. That is why on some occasions Jazz has been absent on Wednesday if he decides he wants to go shopping far away and she wants to go with him and obviously she chooses that over a dance session.

Going back to their conversation one of them tells Bevi that there is a Zumba class on Friday that is offered at the centre. That is one way for her to lose weight. And but even though they are talking about body shape and one has more belly then the other it does not seem to be something that really bothers them. They talk about it in a joking way but they are all happily married and love their children. They are in Spain some of them have not been here that long, it's all a novelty and it seems they just set out to enjoy everything around them. It is as if they would like to be a little thinner but it does not seem to be the most important thing for them right now.

I have brought the same oriental hip scarves last time to see what would happen if I bring them into the session with the Punjabi ladies. When I brought them out they right away had little looks of like little children with big wide eyes. The hip scarves have lots of different colours with dangly shiny coins. They did not all know how to wear them. One of them put it right away on her hips but one put it too high and I explained that this is what we use in Oriental dance classes. It basically shows how much you use your hips because it makes noise. Then they all put them on and started walking in a circle, round and round. They are shaking their hips and so I put on Buddha Bar oriental music. It has a very strong marked drum rhythm and with more like the camel ride. Pree who is the most outgoing of all of them, the coquettish one, started moving around in a snake like body movements, almost like doing a snake dance. Bevi joins in. Sita stays on the edge of the circle. Her movements tend to be a bit more masculine she is the one who puts on the veil and pretends to be the man in the dances. She is not moving very much, just watching the others.

Happy, who is up for anything, tried her best and did some movements and they all started laughing and saying "Look, look what Happy is doing". It was quite a fun session watching the ladies with the veils. I came to the conclusion that really they tend to talk more sexual stuff or more womanly stuff when the twins are not there. The twins are only 18, because they are not married and have no sexual experience these women don't think they should be talking about these things around them it seems to be something that unsaid it's just there. It's unsaid but understood that this type of discussion should not be.

Another thing that was telling when they were talking at the beginning, about bodies and that Pree started talking about her first night of marriage. When they start talking about things that are very personal or very sexual in nature, they go into Punjabi slang which I understand every few words. Every so often, I look at Happy and I am not sure what she is talking about. Happy will say ah she is just talking dirty as usual. Pree is like that, Pree has a dirty mouth. So from what I could gather they were talking about their first night of marriage. In tradition culture, whether it be Punjabi or Hindu or Muslims the woman is expected to be a virgin on her marriage night. They have no sexual experience and usually they will get a match found for them. They will have a match found for them when they turn 18 or 19 then have an engagement. These days they don't get married until they are like 21 or 22. That would be the average marriage age. For women in villages, in the Punjab at least, once you are over a certain age you are too old to be married because obviously you are getting married to make a family so you need to be able to have children too.

All of these women will have gotten married and had sex for the first or any kind of intimate sexual contact with a male for the first time ever on their marriage night. Right now they can joke about it and make it into kind of a caricature of what happened on the wedding night or what the husband said or what they were feeling but that is quite an interesting thing to think about and investigate. It just something that struck me that when they are dancing after they are talking about these sexual things they tend to be more, their movements tend to be more snake like more sexualized.

It was interesting because today I brought the hip scarves. In Bollywood movies when they have a woman who is being very sexy trying to entice a man she will usually do more of a oriental

dance. It was quite fitting that what I took as the accessories for this class actually fitted into their mind set and what they were talking about today.

10. Wednesday 15th March

Today I have Sita, Zoya, Zara, Jazz and Pree. Happy is not here they told me she twisted her foot and had to stay at home. Its strange that Happy is not here. She never ever likes to stay at home. And she is very happy coming to the session. So she must be really in a lot of pain to not have moved. They tell me because she jumped around a lot in our previous session that later on she felt a pain in her foot so she must have got a bit too carried away when she was jumping around and dancing bhangra in the session before.

Happy is usually the one that says she got a cramp in her leg and because of what we did the session before, so it seems like she doesn't actually do any other form of exercise other then when she comes to move in the sessions. I might need to suggest that she do some other form of exercise during the week, maybe going for long walks or something. She is not overweight or anything but she does not go very far from her home. She lives close to the association also. Her children are older she does not have to take them to school. She does not walk or get that much exercise so that is something to take note of.

Today Zoya and Zara get in 10 minutes late. I do not think they have been on time to any session. Sita is the one that tends to be punctual and Jazz also. Pree does sometime come running as well but the twins are always late. They tell me they live on the other side of Plaza Espanya and that is actually a long walk to District 4 and to the civic centre where we hold the sessions. I understand that it is a bit far away and they do depend on their parents giving them permission to leave, usually they help the mother out with the younger children or with the lunch so I have to be flexible with letting them come late. Its better they come late rather than not come at all.

Today when they arrived Pree noticed right away that Zoya and Zara had some pretty nail polish on with pretty designs. She remarked on that right away. And then the talk turned to beauty regimens and routes. Obviously the two younger girls have beautiful skin they are very young. The older ones, I think they have very good skin too a couple of them have those typical sun spots, with Pigment discoloration about the cheek bones and across the head. It's strange I am not sure if it has to do with a vitamin deficiency or something but I have noticed with Asian women that sometimes when they are pregnant or after having children they tend to get these marks on their face. They start talking about different creams. Jazz says she asks her mother in law to send them over when somebody comes from India or when she goes on holiday there. These are special ayurvedic formula creams. They are concerned about having uneven skin tone. I ask them if they usually wear sunscreen when they go out. I say that the Barcelona sun is very strong and a sunscreen would help and stop the pigmentation getting worse.

I don't think they are conscious of the fact that they could be getting sunburn and that would contribute to uneven skin tone. We have a little bit of conversation about sun block and proper creams and things. They asked me what I used, they are quite a bit younger than I. I tell them right away I have not had children and if this is something that happened during their pregnancy

its probably something to do with vitamin deficiency that they should speak to a doctor and see if they can take vitamin pills or at least find out why this happens.

After that chat about beauty regimes than I asked them to get up so so we can do the warm up. The warm-up session is as usual. We are in the circle, moving around I am using much more upbeat music today because I see they are in a good energy level. They start dancing around pushing each other, being funny. The twins sort of look at these woman that are mothers for them.

For example Happy is not here today, but Happy has children that are the same age as the twins. I think it's strange for them to see someone that could be their mother dancing around and being childlike and have fun. They come from a much more serious family set up. I think it is good for them to see these images and to see that just because you are over thirty, I am sure that in their mind that is really old, that you can still enjoy yourself and dance around.

Apart from that nothing very interesting happens in this session. I play the usual traditional Punjabi music where everybody gets into it. It's time to leave and we finish up the session and leave.

11. Monday 20th March

Today Pree is not here and I looking back on the attendance notes there is a pattern to her. Pree tends to come on a Monday and not so much on a Wednesday. I asked Jazz if Pree was ok, was she away, or was she ill. She says no, that her Husband usually has a day off on Wednesdays so if he offers to go shopping or taking her out to another part of Barcelona or something then she would rather do that. Then that is why she usually does not come on Wednesdays, I think fair enough she does come on a Monday and for her to do something different like going out of Barcelona, even if it going to a huge mall at least she is spending time with her husband. Everyone else is here. Sita, Zoya, Happy, Zara and this time they brought a new woman, Nurie. She is 22 years old she is not married and is of Pakistani origin. They say she has just started Spanish classes at the women's association and they told her about these sessions that we are doing and she decided she would like to see what we do here and join in with us.

I welcome her and try to get a bit more information out of her. Where is she from, what else has she done. Nuri is from Islamabad, which is the capital of Pakistan so she speaks beautiful Urdu. If we talk about the South Asian languages the majority of the people who come to my sessions speak Punjabi which is the regional language of the Punjab and that language is in both Pakistan and India because Punjab is half in Pakistan and Half in India. Then the other language that is similar but a bit more formal is the language we call Hindi or usually called Hindustani. It is not a formal as real Hindi is but it is the language that is spoken in Bollywood movies and that is the language in Pakistan that people in Punjabi culture and in Bangladesh and Nepal understand. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan. It's a bit more poetic in the way it is spoken. The diction, at least to my ears, is beautiful.

Nuri answers me in perfect Urdu that she is from Islamabad and I say that is nice and tell her the twins are also from Pakistan. I want to create some kind of affinity between them. I ask them which town they are from. Are they somewhere close to Islamabad and they reply, Jhelum. My

family is from a small town about 20 minutes from Jhelum so that is a zone that I have actually visited when I went to Pakistan and I say as much that my family is also from a town not far away from Jhelum.

At this Nuri looks at me and says, “Oh are you Pakistani?” I explain that I was born in England but yes that, I have been to Pakistan been to Islamabad been to the other places. She says, “But I thought you were Indian!” This starts us off on a discussion about, “How can you tell if somebody is from India or Pakistan just from looking at us.” What was it about me that makes Nuri thinks I am Indian and not from Pakistan. This led to a discussion about Stereotypes.

I asked the Punjabi ladies what was their perception of a Pakistani woman. What does a Pakistani woman look like because they say to me no, no, you behave like an Indian girl. I remember in one of the first observation session I had to tell them twice that I could understand them because when they first saw me they thought I was Spanish. In their minds someone from India, especially in a certain age group, would be dressing in traditional clothes are usually married and behave in a different way so for them if someone is wearing western clothes then they do not identify right away with this person as being from India or Pakistan. If I am speaking Urdu or Hindi in the session and dressed in western clothes than in Nuri’s mind I must be an Indian because Pakistani women would not be dressed like I dress.

I asked the Punjabi ladies how would a Pakistani women dress and what are their ideas of Pakistani woman and so between them I got this. Pakistani woman would not be wearing western clothes. They would usually have their hair covered with a veil or a hijab if they were more religious. They tend to be more submissive and if they are not married they would have a lot more restrictions to leave the house. These are all the things I get from the Punjabi ladies. It’s interesting today we have three women from Pakistan and three from India. It’s good that we can each talk about each other’s idea.

The Pakistani girls say they can recognize the Punjabi ladies because they usually will be wearing Punjabi clothes the same that they wear in Pakistan except for Punjabi ladies tend to have short sleeves or short tops, Caftans as opposed to long sleeve which is more normal in Pakistan. The Punjabi ladies tend to not cover their head, They only cover their head when they are inside the Sikh temple. So usually they will not be cover their head in a religious way on the street. Nuri says that they are louder, that could be misconstrued as loud in a rude way. I think they meant that the Punjabi ladies are more vocal are more heard as opposed to the Pakistani ladies who are taught to be more demure. This would be what the Punjabi ladies are saying that the Pakistani ladies seem submissive. They do not see them talking loudly or disagreeing with anyone when they have met them in the Spanish classes.

Because I am thinking really when immigrants arrive in other country they tend to do everything along community lines so I am sure that really the Punjabi ladies are interacting with other Punjabi ladies in the Sikh temple and the Muslim ladies interact each other maybe when they meet at community events so there is not really that much cross over between them. The only really mix is when they are sitting around the table at the Spanish classes at the Association. So what they see in those is the Pakistani ladies are quieter, they always come covered up. They tend to

run out right away when it's time to leave. I actually saw this in observation when they have association events where everybody brings some food and have a little dance like fun. Like for women's day celebration maybe half the Pakistani ladies tend not to come that day. If they do they just sit and watch the others. There is definitely a difference that I have observed between the Pakistani ladies and the Punjabi ladies. It is interesting in that they are opening up and actually talking about what they observe.

When I look at Zara and Zoya, they are younger, a different generation. I think maybe they are not going to be as quite or as submissive and have more of a voice. But than again when they started talking about marriage and how they are expected to get married young this became another discussion about cousin marriages which they don't do in India, Hindus and Punjabis are not supposed to. The Punjabi ladies are all married, they say even though they all had arranged marriages, they had a choice in who they could say yes to. And they asked Zoya and Zara if they are engaged to anybody yet. Has anybody been shown to them yet? Nuri does not say anything about that. Also they talk about education, most of the Punjabi ladies at least finished college. They got married at 21 or 22 so they all had a good college education and that their parents thought it was good for them to have more of a voice if they had finished their education to a good standard. And also it's something I see in India. People expect a certain amount of education for the men and the women. And if you want to have a marriageable girl in your house then you need to make sure she has a certain amount of education. Only in small villages they will not bother to educate their girls, at least after primary school. But then they also say you cannot over educate. I heard one of them say you can't be overeducated. So I asked, "What does that mean? What is over education?"

One of the twins, Zoya says, if a woman is more educated than a man then a man would want to put her down because he feels like she is above him and that can actually be abuse in the relationship. It surprised me that someone who is 18 would have said that. I am not sure where she would have seen that. Maybe it's something she has seen in a movie I don't know. I don't ask her but when I think about it later I think maybe I should have asked her where did she get that idea from. The others start talking right away that yes, that could happen but it's important to have enough education because at least you know what else you want to do in life.

It's strange, for me, that even in the 21st century we are talking to women who expect to get married and that is just the way it is. I suppose the younger ones, the Pakistani ones who have been here and they are not married and being brought up here it could be different for them. The three Punjabi ladies in the session right now they have come to Spain because they are married to someone who settled here so it does not occur to them that there would be any other life. They certainly would not be in Spain right now if they were not married women.

So, we start talking a bit more about the sessions and I asked them what do they feel when they come to the sessions. What do they think they are doing here? What is the reason for these sessions that we do?

And Zoya says right away, "I love coming to these sessions!" She says that she was in a bad mood on Saturday and then she remembered we had a session coming up on Monday and right away it made her smile and put her in a good mood. She enjoys coming to the sessions and she likes to dance. She feels like after moving and dancing and being with the other made her feel like lighter in the mind. It made her forget about her other boring things.

It was good to hear this because sometimes when I am thinking about these sessions the way they fluctuate. Sometimes I get two women and others I get four or sometimes six. It's nice to hear that somebody actually thinks about these sessions and that that they make them feel a certain way. It's all positive for me.

After that we do our warm-up and I encourage them to mix a little more. It's nice if we have more interaction between the three Pakistanis and the three Indians. For Nuri this is her first session and she is quite shy and does not move as much and keeps sitting down to watch the others. Zara and Zoya as usual really get excited happy and move around with the older ladies. They both look toward the older ladies to see what they are doing and they copy. They twist and turn and laugh. It's good to see. It's strange I feel like today because of this information exchange it's almost like they have been honest with each other and what their stereotype images of each other are. This seems to have brought the group closer together. A very interesting session today.

12. Wednesday 22nd March

When we start today most of them arrive a little later than usual. Zara and Zoya will always arrive late they will always arrive their usual 10-15 minutes late. But it surprised me that all of the Punjabi ladies arrive late today. When they arrive Sita explains to me that they have been having a special week at the Gurdawara – Sikh Temple. I ask them if it is Holi, the festival of colours. It is very important in India they celebrate the beginning of Spring and they celebrate it in a very big way in the Hindu calendar but it is also a very important week in the Punjabi Sikh calendar. They told me yeah this week they have been having special prayers everyday. That every day after leaving the kids at school they have gone to the Sikh temple. It is a 25 -30 minute walk from where they live. They have been walking every day to the temple where they are volunteering. They help with the food preparation and the preparation of the temple and so they have been doing that every day this week and will be doing it for the next few days also. I ask them how often they go to the temple. Sita says she tried to go every other day at least. Some only go on the Sunday prayers, which is the big day that they all do their prayer meeting there.

The Sikh temple has a lot of people that do volunteer work where they cook food or they take food to the temple. I think it's the only religious organization that I know that is open all day long and anytime you can go in and eat food there. They always have food available for people to eat. For these women it's a great way to keep in touch with their religion and their community. It is where they have a lot more contact with people from their villages and from their religion.

They go together so it's fun for them. They are the same women that are in the dance class, the Spanish class and they also go together to the temple. Because this is a special week they have been going everyday they have been dedicating themselves to not only praying but helping to clean up, getting flowers for the main section of the temple which is basically the part where they pray, where they have the Sikh bible, which is on a pedestal with flowers and beautifully adorned.

We start off the session as usual in our circle. Now they are a lot more comfortable moving themselves, which means that I can actually sit down and absorb a little bit more of their

movement profile and watch them. I watch Sita, she is the shortest of the group and she is a very contained woman, serious not as in sad but she is not as quick to laugh as Happy does. I find that she is more observant and much more aware of everything that is going on around her.

Happy is a bundle of energy. I find her very childlike. She moves a lot. And she is much taller than Sita and they are always together. It's almost like they are a comedy duo, one is shorter and serious and the other is taller and much more childlike and very mischievous. They make an interesting pair as friends.

Jazz is always calm and smiles a lot, always seems happy. Shiny bright eyes and she is very soft spoken. Pree, who is her friend, on the other hand is very loud, always got something to laugh about and likes telling dirty jokes of a sexual nature. It is quite funny to listen to Pree.

Zara is the taller twin, she seems like she still trying to grow into her body. She has a flirty expression on her face when she is dancing its like an innocent flirtiness. Zoya is much calmer, very chilled, very receptive to movements around her. She does not try to dominate the dynamic in the group. Where as Zara likes to challenge when the older ladies are doing the movements with the Punjabi music. She will follow but she will then try to put one of her own moments in which makes the Punjabi women laugh and then they will copy her. So even if she does not know the music very well, after a few weeks of observing the other ladies she has actually managed to get some of their movements and does them in her own way.

We started quite a bit later than usual because we had the discussion about religion and the temples.

13. Monday 27th March

no one came!

14. Wednesday 29th March

On Wednesday's I usually have the session at the Mental health institute in the mornings and I was trying to get home between one session to eat and then go the women's session at the centre.

I thought if I took a packed lunch I would be less stressed. And I could be there earlier and calmer. I would have time to process what has happened in the morning session at the mental health centre before going on to the sessions on Wednesday in the afternoon.

I am still feeling a little bit demoralized because on Monday no one turned up. I try to remain positive and think that this is a new session and they will all come. At least I hope so, I took some extra things to the AREP session and I have them in my back pack, which is basically ankle bells and different kind of objects that make noise. Also I have the veils with different florescent colours with sequins. I have all of these things with me. I also had been investigating new Punjabi music because a lot of the new Bollywood movies have Punjabi songs which are sung by stars of the day. I thought it might be a good idea to download some of these songs and take new music that way I don't only just have the traditional music but the also some of the new things that might actually be more fun for the younger girls.

Jazz usually has this kind of music on her phone which friends of hers send from India on social media. I thought ok let's do that and take some new music. It was something positive for me so I did not feel that all of the sessions were the same.

We arrive and today I have a surprise Sonia, who has not been with us for at least the last 10 sessions, she only came to the first 2 sessions, the Pakistani lady with the little boy in the stroller, she has come. And Sita, Zoya, Zara are all there. Jazz did not come today Happy is here and Pree.

Jazz is not here she is at home with the her toddler, who is ill. It's a surprise to see Sonia. I say, "Hey, what's up, it's a surprise to see you, I thought you were not coming the sessions anymore".

She says that she had been very busy. One of her children was ill then another child was ill, then she had so many things to do and that they had family came from Pakistan and they stayed at her house. Obviously she could not leave the people and come out to the dance therapy sessions. I think it was probably very difficult for her to explain what she is doing in our sessions and as in traditional Muslim and Pakistani family they frown on people dancing and doing these kinds of activities. It's good to see her again. We welcome her and every one is saying it's nice to see her again. She had been coming to the Spanish classes. So the women had seen her in the Spanish classes. Just for the last couple of weeks she had not been in the dance therapy classes. I open the rucksack and take out the veils and bells and leave them there and tell them that they can use any of the items. They can use during the session. I start with a warm-up in the circle as usual.

We try to integrate Sonia as best we can, she is a bit awkward she has not been here for a few weeks and the group has become quite integrated. They know each other's movements and they know each other's triggers, they laugh and push and they do silly things. When they decide to get the veils I found it quite funny that Zara and Zoya pick them up and start putting the veil around the body as if they were a sari and they take two different colours each and put them around their heads and cover their faces and really like dressing up. It still makes me laugh because when I take the veils to the other place I always think they have so much fun dressing up with them because this is not something normal in their culture. They have not actually seen beautiful veils with sequins. But I am seeing the twins behave with the same excitement of dressing up, like when the Spanish dress up to be Indians.

They think it's fun. I did not think it would happen in this context but it does. I suppose really for Zara and Zoya it is not normal in their family to wear saris to dress up like they would see actresses in a Bollywood movie or women that dance in the pop videos. It's fun for them to dress up and be somebody else. Sita puts one of the turbans on her head and runs around dances in more of a masculine way and Sonia picks up one of the veils and does not seem to know what to do with. I tell her to do whatever music wants you to, just feel it. But she quickly sits down and observes the others and does not really participate in the session.

15. Monday 3rd April

Today we have Jazz, Sita, Happy and Pree; the twins have not come today. Today Happy is all excited because she said last night she had been looking at the internet looking at different designs for Punjabi suits she was ordering from her mother in law who was going to send them to her by postal package. So now the conversation turns to clothes. Pree starts telling us about her different clothes and the colours she likes and the many Punjabi suits she has in her wardrobe. Sita says the one she is wearing right now is material she brought in the Glories market in Barcelona. She had it sewn up what did we all think about that material. Then Happy whipped out her mobile phone and started showing us all the different designs and different colours. She said her sister-in-law in India made some of these clothes and also knew the people where they could order them from.

This was a good 10 minutes as they explain different clothes, they all compared what they had in their wardrobe, what they were going to buy, what they liked. It was interesting listening to them.

We started the warm up. This time I brought some ankle bells and drum sticks and different things that they could make noise with it. It was quite funny when they saw the ankle bells they put them on their feet kicked off their shoes and started mimicking a classical dance movements with their feet, arms out and about like they were doing classical dance moves. None of them have classical dance training so it was basically when you see young children pretending to be ballerinas, they go on their tiptoes and dance around. This was the same as watching little girls doing that except this was grown woman who were trying to mimic Indian classical dance. I decided to carry on with the warm-up and show them some moves that they could do with the ankle bells and showed them some hand positions and stuff that we do in classical Indian dance. This made them laugh. They decided to incorporate some of those movements as they walked around the room. Then I played Bollywood music. The thing is that only Pree listens to this music at home. The others don't really don't know how to move around to this kind of music. They don't seem to like it very much.

I go back to the Punjabi folkloric music and all four of them started dancing and singing along. They know all of the songs and this is when they let loose and dance.

16. Wednesday 5th April

This time we have Sita and Happy, Pree is ill. Now I have actually learned that when they say this person is ill they mean this person has their period. So Pree has got very heavy period pains and has not come today. I remember when I was young my mom would say so and so was ill and that is when they are not going to the mosque. Later on as I grew older I realized that when you are on your period you do not go to the mosque. So this was basically why they would say you were ill. Ill was always said like it was inverted commas and all the ladies in the room would know that you were on your period. Zara and Zoya, they explained that they had visitors from England at home and that they had all gone shopping together and done some activity with the family. That is why they had not been able to come to the previous session.

Happy is there as usual happy and laughing and enjoying the session. I asked them if they know the whereabouts of Jazz today. They tell me that Jazz had been in the Spanish class the day

before and she had a very bad cough so she is probably staying at home for that reason.

I decide to do more of a directed session today. In the warm-up I really make them think about their breathing about their body and I asked them to think, considering some of them are ill, about which part of their body needs special attention. They should massage that part of the body. I watch as they follow my instructions. I see that Zoya is massaging the back of her neck and Zara is leaning down and massaging her knees and her ankles. Happy is massaging her stomach region. Sita does not seem to know what to do so much and keeps looking around and seems to be quite shy.

I say if they feel like, they can close their eyes, thinking that that would make them feel a little less conscious and concentrated. Sita closes her eyes with a little shy smile on her face and I see her massaging her own head.

I put on very soft music and let them continue to look after their own bodies, thinking about where it hurts, what do they feel. Then I ask them to start stretching and stretching around and occupying all of the space around their body and I say to them try to make yourself as big as you possible can you can use all the space around you and then they start moving around the room using all the space around them. Then I tell them to imagine they are inside of a huge bubble. A big plastic ball that is transparent and they have a lot of space inside of this ball and they can move wherever they want. Then they have to try and move around the room without letting their bubbles touch the person in front of them or around them and this is quite fun. Then I tell them if they do manage to get too close the other person their bubble will pop and then you have to go into the bubble of the other person. This started being funny. The twins right away pop their bubbles and get together. Then they are hugging each other and moving around the room together. I see how they enjoy being together. Sita is using smaller space. Her bubble is much smaller. Happy's is actually very big and her bubble is all over the place. She looks like she is trying to go towards people to get her bubble to bump into theirs. They are running away from her and then in the end they the end of playing a game of tag running all over the room and around, hitting each other. It's almost like watching children in a children's playground. It's fun to see them let go and just really get in touch with their inner child.

Upon reflection even though some of these women are 27, 30, 32 they are actually for themselves they were quickly brought into the grown up world, they got married, they changed countries, they have children and it must times few and far between that they can actually get in touch with their inner child and just be playful and its good for them that they have this space where they can let go and just be children.

I feel like we made a nice little breakthrough there. At the end we sit down and I know the Easter holidays are coming up. I need to consult with them on the dates their children will be on holiday. I know that it will affect at least one Monday and Wednesday and another Monday. We look at the dates I also had booked to be away one week during Easter. That is my break also. We will meet again on the 24th of April.

We are half way through our sessions and we just finished session 16.

Easter Holidays for the children 10th April – 21st April

17. Monday 24th April

It's the first Monday back after the Easter holidays. I am waiting for the people to arrive, I stay sitting for at least 15 minutes and its now 3:30 so I send a message on the whatsapp to ask them if anybody is coming because I am here and I am not sure you remember that we have a session today.

I could have sent them a message last night, Sunday evening but I have to stop myself from being like a mother hen. I feel like if we actually spoken about a date and they have actually written it down, then they should be adult enough to remember that we have a session. It's not my job to send them a message the night before that they have a session and that they need to come. That would be like I am coercing them into coming or guilt tripping them. I did not do that. I thought let's see what happens if they actually turn up. So I stayed sitting. I got a message from the twins saying that they were going to be leaving to go to England soon and they forgot to tell me that they are doing some shopping to get clothes and things because they are going to be leaving soon. And they are not sure if they are going to come to any more sessions in the meantime, but they will let me know,

Apart from that I do not get any messages from anybody else. I did not get any further message so I waited another 15 to 20 minutes and then I saw that nobody actually came. I stayed sitting to use that time to make some notes about the previous at the mental health centre. So while I sat making notes and going through some of the my stuff from the other practice work, maybe about another 20-25 minutes went by.

Again deflated not really demoralized because it's again, it is an uphill struggle to try and get this group to do things together, to be here at the sessions. Sometimes I do feel like, when this happens I feel like I am wasting my time because I don't know. It's having to deal with feelings of what am I doing here? Maybe I should not have decided to do my practice with this group, even though I am learning a lot. It's not nice when I organize myself and I come running to do the practice and I am just sitting here and nobody comes. We do have a whatsapp group and I do not even get any message.

18. Wednesday 26th April

Today only Sita arrived since she is actually punctual. She tells me that Happy is not coming today. She decided that she needs to go get clothes for her children and her husband has taken her to the mall to go shopping.

I got a message from Jazz that she could not make it today and she says that Pree is at the airport, she had gone to pick up some relatives arriving from India. I already knew the twins were not coming so basically left Sita.

She said that she felt bad for not coming but she knew the others were not coming and she did not want to leave me sitting waiting. I asked her what had happened on Monday and she said she was very busy. I reminded her that we do have a whatsapp group where we can keep each other informed.

Then we talked a little bit about what she did during the Easter holidays and she said the children were at home so she took them a lot to the park on her husband's day off they went to another village in Catalonia where some of the husbands friends live and they went to visit other people. She went to the temple, most days as well to do voluntary work at the temple, taking the children with her too. Then she talked a little bit about her family back in India and that when she came to Spain and she had her children here she had a lot of hopes for the education and she wanted them to do well. She is always supervising a lot with their homework even though she could not really help them because she does not speak Catalan. But she can help them with maths and she dedicates her time because she really wants her children to do well. That was interesting because Sita is usually the one that does not talk as much, tends to be more of the shy one and lets Happy take most of the conversation if not Happy then Pree.

It was nice to have her on her own. Then I asked her if I put some music on would she like to do some warm-up, she said no she did not want to do any dance or movement and if I didn't mind she would like to leave since there was not body else there she did not feel like moving. She just wanted to go home.

So I asked her to tell the group that we only had a month left and it would be interesting if everybody could come next week so we could sit down and have a talk about how we want to organize the sessions. Because I need to know what's happening, what they are feeling, what they think they want to do. We have sessions through the end of May and up to the first week in June.

Usually we decided in the beginning that, or at least I had arranged to be available for two session a week and it's something we need to have a conversation about. It's something I did mention also in supervision that, because it seemed like at the end of the day instead of two different groups of people with different days that in the end I had the same group of between 4 and 6 people. And sometimes somebody extra would come but really I did not see the need for having two groups anymore because my reason for having a Monday Session and a Wednesday session in the beginning had been because some of the women said they could only come on Monday and others could only come on Wednesdays. And in the end that was not the case. I did not explain all of this to Sita but I did say we needed to have a conversation next session and could she make sure to come so we would have enough people to sit down and have a conversation about what we want to do next.

19. Wednesday 3rd May

There was not a session on Monday because it was the first of May Bank Holiday. Obviously the centre was not open nor the schools, so we did not have a session that day. It's now a week later. I had a Whatsapp message from the twins reminding me that they were leaving for London to stay with their Cousins. And they will be staying there until the end of June. I know that Ramadan, the Holy month for the Muslims, is starting soon. I assume that they will stay for all of Ramadan in London with these relatives. If they come back at the end of June it means they come back after the festivities at the end of Ramadan this also means that they will not be coming to any more sessions because our sessions are supposed to finish first week of June.

It is a shame I did not get to see them at least a couple of times before they left and I will not be able to say goodbye to them because they will not be coming to the session today and then they will be flying off soon. I remember them telling me a while back that their mother's sister lives in London so they will probably be staying at her house and also there was something that was kind of hinted at by Zoya that Zara's suitor, as in the person whom she might be having her marriage arranged to is one of the cousins that lives in the England. Maybe this is a whole thing that the family is trying to get to know each other and maybe she will be engaged by the time she comes back. She is already over 18 and I am sure the family, considering they have not put them into full time education, even though they said that they were learning Spanish and doing maths and computer classes because they were going to go to college. It would not surprise me that this is just the thing that they end up getting engaged; at least one of them and then married by next year, who knows. It is just something that I am imagining, because I am not going to see them again. I do feel sad that I did not get to say goodbye to them. But there you go. This is the job we are doing right now with these sessions.

Today I have Sita, Jazz, Happy and Pree. They were quite contrite I said to them, its ok if you are not going to come. If I know in advance we can postpone the session to another day, It would be nice to know or if you know in advance.

I ask them if they would be able to commit to just one session a week instead of the two. If they can decide on whether they want a Monday session or a Wednesday session because then that way it would be easier for them to commit to coming once a week for the next five weeks.

Considering that we are on session 19 today it means that we have 4 more weeks in May and one week in June which would bring us up to 24 sessions. That means that all 4 of them can sit down and make a commitment and tell me that they are going to be coming to all of these sessions. It's like making a new contract. I tell them that the twins are not going to come back so basically it's the four of us and that for me four is a nice size group. We can probably achieve something together in the next few weeks.

We have sessions for an hour and half. As long as they are prepared to make that commitment and we go down to once a week I would like to get some sort of commitment from them. They all agree that is fine and start to discuss whether Monday or Wednesday is better. Most say Monday is a difficult day because their husbands are off on Monday so again it's more difficult to be consistent in attendance on Monday.

Jazz says that her husband is off only on Wednesdays but if they agree on Wednesday she will be happy to come too. They decide on Wednesday and we all shake hands on this because this now a firm commitment for the next 5 sessions we have left and I expect them all to be here and make effort.

Happy has a headache and she said she felt bad for not coming last time, she actually does not want to move very much. Normally she is the one that has a lot of energy. She said she really did not want to do anything.

So I led them through some deep breathing exercise and did some stretching. I say, "If someone does not want to get up out of the chair that is fine. If anyone wants to get up we can do some movements together."

I just make them work on their breathing make them think about how their feet touch the ground and I invite them to take off their shoes because we are in a gym room with a nice wooden floor today. We can work on a grounding and breathing exercises for today. They decided they wanted to leave early. I tell them that I will see them next.

20. Wednesday 10th May

Today when I arrive, I am quite pleasantly surprised because they are all there already in the room waiting for me.

They actually managed to ask the guy which room we are in and they are already upstairs waiting for me. Today I changed my hours at the mental health day centre because I will have fewer sessions with the women. I now started doing the extra session individual session at the mental health centre which means I finish a little bit later on Wednesday.

As this was one of the first few times doing it I did not get my timing right. So I arrived at the Centro about 5 minutes late. I had sent a whatsapp message saying I was on the way because I did not want them to think I was not coming. It was quite funny to arrive and quite a pleasant surprise to see them all already in there.

It was the four of them Sita, Happy Pree and Jazz and also a woman I don't know and two youngsters. Who looked like there were at the age of 6 or 7 years old. Pree introduced her as Pree too. They have the same pet name. This was the good friend of hers who she went to pick up from the airport a few weeks ago. They explained that Pree had come over as part of the family reagroupment a few years ago. She decided she did not like living in Spain so she moved back to India with her two children and they are being educated at a very good school there.

That the father sent money back to India for the upkeep of his wife and his children and that she was happier being there. As she has residency in Spain she needs to come back before six months are up. She stays "on holiday" here for 2 months because otherwise she would lose her residency. It's a very long process to start all over again she loses her residency rights. She tries to organize this around the children's school and make sure she comes when their exams are over, which just happened now just before the beginning of May, their schools are on holiday in India, then she will fly back.

That is quite interesting because the others actually prefer being in Spain a lot more. This is one woman that prefers to be there. Pree was laughing that now that she is back she can have some time with her husband. Again Pree starts making little sexual jokes and they all start laughing. The two younger children that are there, they are very shy and they look at what we are doing but they stay seated outside of the circle with the women talking.

I put the warm-up music on and I put high energy music on and right away they are jumping around and dancing. Pree one moves a lot more than usual because this is her good friend and it's nice for her, she wants to show her good friend what kind of dancing that we do and what we do in the sessions. She thought it was interesting for her friend to bring her along. As I said this is a semi open group so we don't usually say they cannot bring extra people with them if they want to. It's a fun session. They don't actually talk about any deep issues. They are happy and moving around and the session passes quite quickly without any other major stuff happening.

21. Wednesday 17th May

This time I get Sita, Jazz Pree and Happy. So we got a full house again. And this time I took a bag of cabaret boas, like the feather boas and flower garlands and feathers and lots of different things. I thought let's see what happens if I take something different because again I had come straight from the other place a where I do my practice in the mornings. I used that in the session there and thought it might be interesting to see what happens with the Punjabi women with this.

When I opened the rucksack, they thought that this was really fun when they saw all of these little flowers and garlands, flower clips for their hair and the feather boas come out of my ruck sack this really peaked their interest. After the warm-up they started picking up the various things and playing around with each other trying the feather boas around their neck. They are pretending to be cabaret queens. In Bollywood movies you do actually see a cabaret numbers which are like Hollywood, they use the feathers. In Indian weddings they use the flower garlands and sometimes you see them twined around the hair that has been put up in a bun. So this is not unusual for them. They play around with the flowers and pretend to plait the flowers into each other's hair. It's interesting to see different play. What I see again is that Sita is still quite contained within herself. Still does not move quite as much as the others. But Happy pulls her and moves her around and makes her move a lot more. Pree and Jazz are in their usual mood; Pree jump, jumping around as much as possible and then saying Oh my god I am so hot.

22. Wednesday 24th May

Today the conversation centres on the upcoming holidays. Happy is in a bit of a bad mood because they had been checking flights couple of months earlier and she had not make a decision on when she wanted to go Depending on the children's exams and what time the studies finish.

Because she left it that long, now the flights are between 100 and 150 euros more expensive to go from Barcelona to Delhi and that in itself is quite high but when its four tickets, her, her husband and her two children it's like 400 to 600 euros more, nearly another ticket then if she had of booked it earlier so she is in a bit of mood about that. She is on her phone checking flights and prices. She asks me if I know of anything about flights and the other women start talking about visiting India and who had been to India just only last year. Sita said she had not been for a couple of years. Jazz said they can go sometimes once a year or maybe twice in the same year. Because when her husband feels like going he just goes and buys the tickets and off they go. Both of her children are younger, seventeen months and 3 years old. One of them is in nursery school. They just go when they feel like it.

As Happy's children are older and in very serious studies right now she can only go in the summer and they like to go at least every two years if not once a year. I find that quite unusual because when I was a child our family actually had to save up a lot of money just for my mother to go from England to Pakistan.

It's unusual to hear that people can really go every year even though they are on one income families and their husbands are kitchen helps. They must live a much pared down lifestyle to able to afford it.

It was interesting to see that they are back and forth. It also means that the wives are very happy because they get to see their families and get to be back in their home country quite often. After a half an hour of talking about all of this, it's quite difficult to get them to stop talking once they get talking about things. I make them do a warm-up and the session is more or less the

same, nothing out of the ordinary happens. As we only have a couple of more sessions. We have settled into a routine where they come, they talked for about a half hour. We have set patterns of songs that they like. There is the warm-up where they are all doing different movements and taking turns at being the leader. I try to bring something else to dress up in just to make it a bit different to see if they do anything different. But really I just see the same dynamic and the same movement in the group. There is nothing new to mention on that.

23. Wednesday 31st May

This is our second to the last session. Today I get Sita, Happy and Jazz, Pree does not come today. She sent me a message that she had a stomach ache. When the rest of the three arrived they asked where Pree is, I told them that she messaged me that she got a stomach ache and is not coming today. They say “What stomach ache? Her husband is home today, she is probably hanging out with him or they are probably going out somewhere.”

I say ok. Jazz was the first one to arrive. She arrived quite early and Sita and Happy arrive more than 30 minutes later even though they sent a message to say they were on their way. Jazz was talking about her family, her son and daughter and about the trips to India that they had done earlier in the year and how they had gone to one of her cousin’s weddings. She explained all about the clothes and the different things they had done at the wedding. That seemed to make her happy explaining all of these different things. How it was the first time she had taken her daughter. Her daughter is only 17 months old she would have been shown off to all the family and how everyone was really happy to see her. It was the first time the little girl had seen her family also. Then she said complained that when we were deciding on the day Monday or Wednesday, she is the one whose husband is off on Wednesdays. She decided to go with the group and to do the sessions on Wednesdays and today nobody else had bothered to show up. Even Sita and Happy they are on their way and they have not turned up yet. This made her quite angry or if not angry a little pissed off.

Then the door opened Happy and Sita burst in with flip flops on and I ask “What happened girls you have been on your way for the last half hour?”

They said no they were about to leave and some guest arrived at the house and then they had to receive the guest, make them a quick cup of tea and be polite. They tried to get rid of the guests as quickly as possible and Happy said look at me I have not even put my shoes on I just put my flip flops on and came running out of the house because I really wanted to be here. That was actually quite funny. I put some music on right away and start some movement before they all start chatting about more things.

I said alright let’s try to relax you now because they were out of breath and it really looked like they had come running from their house. So we did some breathing exercises some movement and then I asked them if they wanted to use the veils because I had them in my rucksack. We took the veils and I got the hip scarves. They put the hip scarves around their hips and started shaking their hips it was quite funny to see the different movements. Happy, her movements are big and brusque. She is moving from side to side and you don’t actually hear the hip scarves making that much noise. Sita was looking at me trying her best to make the same kind of movements with her knees trying to make the hip scarves make more noise. Jazz was just shaking more of her shoulders and upper region than her lower region. They were pretending to do belly dance. Then we took them off and kept them in our hands, shaking them, making

bracelet noises shaking the hip scarves in time to the music. Then I put the bhangra track on and we moved around for a while.

The session came to an end very quickly because we started much later than usual. I explained them that next week would be session 24 the 7th of June and that that is our last session and what would they like to do in our last session. Is there anything special they would like to do? Happy who loves cooking said she would like to bring something for a pica pica and that she would like to bring some food and it would be nice for us to sit down and eat something together as our last session. I want you to remember that we made this food and I want you to taste my home cooking and it will be something nice. Between them they decide to organize what they are going to make and bring. Sita said she would bring a bottle of coke and Jazz was going to make something else, one of them will make something sweet. I said please let Pree know so that she is included and since this is our last session together it would be nice if she were here and we can all say goodbye together and have something to eat, but at the end of the session. So that will be our last session.

24. Wednesday 7th June

Our last session today! All four of my remaining ladies arrive.

Jazz said her foot was hurting so she didn't want to dance but as it was the last day she didn't want to miss the session.

She brought her little girl along today, after a long time. She was half asleep and sat down most of the time just watching us and drinking from her milk bottle.

Sita had brought her 3 year old son also; school is only half day in June for the P3, P4, and P5 children. He dances bhangra and jumps around us as we do the warm up.

Happy and Pree are wearing beautiful colourful Punjabi suits. I comment on how beautiful the clothes are and they say, of course they wanted to dress up as this is the going away party!

Pree makes comments about her husband and some sexual innuendo, which makes the others laugh. I think she does this on purpose as she knows they make "pretend-scandalous-faces" and giggle. I understand the last bit (in Punjabi, of course) "..... of course I can grab him where ever I want and he to me too. We are married after all!" Sita says that I am going to laugh when I think of their conversations. Jazz asked if we will continue with the sessions from September, so I explain to them, again, that I am doing University practise sessions and that I was only supposed to be here for these few months. I end on a positive note that I am sure I will see them again some time.

I play all their favourite mixes especially the traditional Punjabi songs. In the end we do a cool down and stretch.

FINAL CHECKOUT

Once the session is over we stay 15 minutes longer and have the pica pica.

They talk about how they have felt special having a session for them to come to. Happy had enjoyed telling her husband that she had somewhere to be instead of waiting for him to take her out on his day off. Pree was happy that they got to dance to their traditional music, Jazz agreed with her. She said they only got to dance to this music if they were at an Indian wedding in India and that after a long time she had felt free to just enjoy moving and having special time for herself. Sita said that she had never been much of a dancer but she had felt good joining in with

the others and that this had been a good way to let go of stress and forget about their daily routines. They all chimed in with their agreement.

I feel like I have achieved something, even if small, that I created a space for them to bond, to move together, to laugh together. That they had been able to revisit their old folk music and relive the times that they were young, carefree girls before the responsibilities of married life. I have had serious doubts about whether I have been doing DMT sessions or not. These women have needed a space to just talk too. I feel like even though some of them knew each other from India and they see each other at the Spanish class or at the Sikh temple, in the DMT sessions they opened up to each other. That when they were explaining something to me about their family or their feelings, I felt like this was the first time that they were discussing these topics with each other. That their conversations even though on a light note, were deeper. Sometimes one would say me too, or nod in agreement or ask “really?”

When they moved I felt like some of the qualities of movement changed when we used different props. When I played their traditional music they moved like young girls dancing at a wedding or in their school playgrounds. I helped them create a space to be carefree young girls, a space that was just theirs where they were proud to come to.

I had to understand that they had other pressing concerns being wives and mothers first and foremost but that I had managed to connect with them on many levels. I couldn't take it personally if they came late or missed sessions; this is part of working with this group. It has been a two way therapy in some way. I saw what my mother might have felt when she left all her family behind and joined my father in the UK. How she might have felt isolated after having me, her first baby born in England, without any family members to help her. They didn't have organised English language classes but she made friends with other Pakistani wives in the same situation as her. They became a self-help sisterhood and I called all these women Aunties as I grew older even though they were not related to my mother.

This was my first experience working with women from this background. I think that with more experience I could do better.